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THEIR

CLAIMS AND CONFLICTS:

And an Appendix.

BY HENRY ROGERS.

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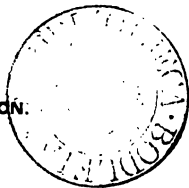
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CONTAINING SOME

ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS
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THE Author and Publishers of the following Essay issue it, in its present form, in compliance with the strongly expressed wishes of many persons whose judgement, on all accounts, is entitled to the highest respect.

If time had permitted, the Author would have been glad to develope and illustrate his views on some points more perfectly, and to discuss some topics which his space compelled him to omit. This, under the circumstances, has not been practicable; but he has not been able to resist the opportunity of recording, a little more fully than was possible within the limits of the Essay, as originally published, his impressions of the chief characteristics of Dr. Strauss' work, entitled the "Life of Jesus;" and it is hoped that his observations on this subject, however general, may not be without their value to the youthful readers of that insidious book.

In the Essay itself, the Author has contented himself with adding here and there a sentence or two; making a few verbal alterations; correcting some few errata occasioned by the necessary haste with which the Article was composed and printed; and erasing or softening an occasional asperity of

expression which the argument did not require, and which nothing but such a necessity would, on a deliberate revision, induce him to retain. He is more than content to efface any expression which Charity declares to be superfluous to Truth, and Truth declares may be sacrificed to Charity.

For the undiminished severity, however, with which he has still felt himself compelled to speak of certain books and certain theories, he cannot, as an honest man, apologise; believing them, as he does, to be most erroneous and pernicious. He can only say that the authors on whose productions he has been constrained to comment, are personally absolute strangers to him, and that, as far as he knows himself, he has not been conscious of feeling towards them one particle of the "odium theologicum." Towards themselves, he has no worse wish — and he can wish nothing better, either for himself or for any man — than that they may seek and find the TRUTH.

REASON AND FAITH;

THEIR

CLAIMS AND CONFLICTS.

“REASON and Faith,” says one of our old divines, with the quaintness characteristic of his day, “resemble the two sons of the patriarch; Reason is the firstborn, but Faith inherits the blessing.” The image is ingenious, and the antithesis striking; but nevertheless the sentiment is far from just. It is hardly right to represent Faith as *younger* than Reason: the fact undoubtedly being, that human creatures trust and believe, long before they reason or know. But the truth is, that both Reason and Faith are coeval with the nature of man, and were designed to dwell in his heart together. They are, and ever were, and, in such creatures as ourselves, must be, reciprocally complementary; — neither can exclude the other. It is as impossible to exercise an acceptable faith without reason for so exercising it, — that is, without exercising reason while we exercise faith*, — as it is to

* Let it not be said that this is playing upon an ambiguity in the word Reason; considered in the first clause as an *argument*; and in the second, as the characteristic endowment of our species. The distinction between Reason and *Reasoning* (though most important) does not affect the above statement; for though Reason may be exercised where there is no giving of *reasons*, there can be no giving of *reasons* without the exercise of Reason.

apprehend by our reason, exclusive of faith, all the truths on which we are daily compelled to *act*, whether in relation to this world or the next. Neither is it right to represent either of them as failing of the promised heritage, except as both may fail alike, by perversion from their true end, and depravation of their genuine nature ; for if to the faith of which the New Testament speaks so much, a peculiar blessing is promised, it is evident from that same volume that it is not a "faith without reason" any more than a "faith without works," which is commended by the Author of Christianity. And this is sufficiently proved by the injunction "to be ready to give a reason for the hope," — and therefore for the faith, — "which is in us."

If, therefore, we were to imitate the quaintness of the old divine, on whose *dictum* we have been commenting, we should rather compare Reason and Faith to the two trusty spies, "faithful amongst the faithless," who confirmed each other's report of "that good land which flowed with milk and honey," and to *both* of whom the promise of a rich inheritance there was given, — and, in due time, amply redeemed. Or, rather, if we might be permitted to pursue the same vein a little further, and throw over our shoulders for a moment that mantle of allegory which none but Bunyan could wear long and wear gracefully, we should represent Reason and Faith as twin-born ; — the one, in form and features the image of manly beauty, — the other, of feminine grace and gentleness ; but to each of whom, alas ! is allotted a sad privation. While the bright eyes of Reason are full of piercing and restless intelligence, his ear is closed to sound ; and while Faith has an ear of exquisite delicacy, on her sightless orbs, as she lifts them towards heaven, the sunbeam plays in vain. Hand in hand the brother and sister, in all mutual love, pursue their

way, through a world on which, like ours, day breaks and night falls alternate ; by day the eyes of Reason are the guide of Faith, and by night the ear of Faith is the guide of Reason. As is wont with those who labour under these privations respectively, Reason is apt to be eager, impetuous, impatient of that instruction which his infirmity will not permit him readily to apprehend ; while Faith, gentle and docile, is ever willing to listen to the voice by which alone truth and wisdom can effectually reach her.

It has been shown by Butler in the fourth and fifth chapters (Part I.) of his great work, that the entire constitution and condition of man, viewed in relation to the present world alone, and consequently all the analogies derived from that fact in relation to a future world, suggest the conclusion that we are here the subjects of a probationary discipline, or in a course of education for another state of existence. But it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently insisted on, that if in the actual course of that education, (of which *enlightened obedience* to the "law of virtue," as Butler expresses it, or, which is the same thing, to the dictates of supreme wisdom and goodness, is the great end,) we give an unchecked ascendancy to either Reason or Faith, we vitiate the whole process. The chief instrument by which that process is carried on is not Reason alone, or Faith alone, but their well-balanced and reciprocal interaction. It is a system of alternate checks and limitations, in which Reason does not supersede Faith, nor Faith encroach on Reason. But our meaning will be more evident when we have made one or two remarks on what are conceived to be their respective provinces.

In the domain of Reason men generally include, 1st, what are called "intuitions," 2nd, "necessary deductions" from these ; and 3rd, deductions from their own

direct "experience;" while in the domain of Faith are ranked all truths and propositions which are received, not *without* reasons indeed, but for reasons underived from the *intrinsic* evidence (whether intuitive or deductive, or directly experimental) of the propositions themselves; — for reasons (such as credible testimony, for example,) *extrinsic* to the proper meaning and significance of such propositions. Yet such reasons, by accumulation and convergency, may be capable of subduing the force of any difficulties or improbabilities, which cannot be *demonstrated* to involve absolute contradictions.*

* Of the first kind of truths, or those perceived by intuition, we have examples in what are called "self-evident axioms," and "fundamental laws" or "conditions of thought," which no wise man has ever attempted to *prove*. Of the second, we have examples in the entire fabric of mathematical science, reared from its basis of axioms and definitions, as well as in every other *necessary* deduction from *admitted* premises. The third virtually includes any conclusion in science based on direct experiment, or observation; though the belief of the truth even of Newton's system of the world, when received as Locke says he received, and as the generality of men receive it, — without being able to follow the steps by which the great geometer proves his conclusions, — may be represented rather as an act of Faith than an act of Reason; as much so as a belief in the truth of Christianity, founded on its historic and other evidences. The greater part of a man's knowledge, indeed, even of science, — even the greater part of a scientific man's knowledge of science, based as it is on testimony alone (and which so often compels him to renounce to-day what he thought certain yesterday), — may be not unjustly considered as more allied to Faith than Reason. It may be said, perhaps, that the above classification of the truths received by Reason and Faith respectively is arbitrary; that even some of their alleged sources are not always clearly distinguishable; that the evidence of experience may in some sort be reduced to testimony, — that of sense; and testimony reduced to experience, — that of human veracity under given circumstances; both being founded on the observed uniformity of certain phenomena under similar conditions. We admit the truth of this: and we admit it the more willingly, as it shows that so inextricably intertwined in our nature are the roots both of Reason and Faith that no definitions that can be framed will completely separate them; none that will not involve many phenomena which may be

In receiving important doctrines on the strength of such evidence, and in holding to them against the perplexities they involve, or, what is harder still, against the prejudices they oppose, every exercise of an intelligent faith will, on analysis, be found to consist; its only necessary limit will be *proven contradictions* in the propositions submitted to it; for, then, no evidence can justify belief, or even render it possible. But no *other* difficulties, however great, will justify unbelief, where man has all that he can justly demand, — evidence such in its nature as he can deal with, and on which he is accustomed to *act* in his most important affairs in this world (thus admitting its validity), and such in amount as to render it more likely that the doctrines it substantiates are true, than, from mere *ignorance* of the mode in which these difficulties can be solved, he can infer them to be false. “Probabilities,” says Bishop Butler, “are to us the very guide of life;” and when the probabilities arise out of evidence on which we are competent to pronounce, and the improbabilities merely from our surmises, where we have no evidence to deal with, and perhaps, from the limitation of our capacities, could not deal with it, if we had it, it is not difficult to see what course practical wisdom tells man he *ought* to pursue; and which he invariably *does* pursue, whatever difficulties beset him, — in all cases except one!

said to fall under the dominion of one as much as of the other. It is sufficient, for our practical purpose, to take without any too subtle refinement, the line of demarcation which is, perhaps, as obvious as any, and as generally recognised. Few would say that a *generalised* inference from direct experiment was not matter of reason rather than of faith; though an act of faith is involved in the process; and few would not call confidence in testimony where probabilities were nearly balanced, by the name of faith rather than reason, though an act of reason is involved in *that* process. We are much more anxious to show their general involution with one another than the points of discrimination between them.

The more we reflect, the more we shall see that an inviolable union — a mutual dependence of Reason and Faith — is the great law of the moral school in which we are being educated. This law is equally, or almost equally, its characteristic, whether we regard man simply in his present condition, or in his present *in relation* to his future condition, — as an inhabitant only of this world, or a candidate for another ; and to this law, by a series of analogies as striking as any of those which Butler has pointed out (and on which we heartily wish his comprehensive genius had expended a chapter or two), Christianity, in the demands it makes on *both* principles conjointly, is evidently adapted.

Men often speak, indeed, as if the exercise of Faith was excluded from their condition as inhabitants of the present world. But it requires but a very slight consideration to show that the boasted prerogative of Reason is here also that of a limited monarch ; and that its attempts to make itself absolute can only end in its own dethronement, and, after successive revolutions, in all the anarchy of absolute pyrrhonism.

For in the intellectual and moral education of man, considered merely as a citizen of the present world, we see the constant and inseparable union of the two principles, and provision made for their perpetual exercise. He cannot advance a step, indeed, without both. We see faith demanded not only amidst the dependence and ignorance in which childhood and youth are passed ; not only in the whole process by which we acquire the imperfect knowledge which is to fit us for being men ; but to the very last we may be truly said to *believe* far more than we *know*. “Indeed,” says Butler, “the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence with which we are obliged to take up in the daily course of life, is scarce to be expressed.” Nay,

in an intelligible sense, even the "primary truths," or "first principles," or "fundamental laws of thought," or "self-evident maxims," or "intuitions," or by whatever other names philosophers have been pleased to designate them, which, in a special sense, are the very province of *reason*, as contra-distinguished from "reasoning" or logical deduction, may be said almost as truly to depend on faith as on reason for their reception.* For the only ground for *believing* them true is that man cannot help so believing them! The same may be said of that great fact, without which the whole world would be at a stand-still—a belief in the uniformity of the phenomena of external nature; that the same sun, for example, which rose yesterday and to-day, will rise again to-morrow. That this cannot be *demonstrated*, is admitted on all hands; and that it is not absolutely proved from *experience* is evident, both from the fact that experience cannot prove any thing future, and from the fact that the uniformity supposed is only accepted as partially and transiently true; the great bulk of mankind, even while they so confidently act upon that uniformity, rejecting the idea of its being an *eternal* uniformity. Every theist believes that the present order of the universe once *began* to be; and every Christian and most other men, believe that it will also one day cease to be.

But perhaps the most striking example of the helplessness to which man is soon reduced if he relies upon his reason alone, is the spectacle of the issue of his investigations into that which one would imagine he must know most intimately, if he knows anything; and that is, his own nature—his own mind. There is

* Common language seems to indicate this: Since we call that disposition of mind which leads some men to deny the above fundamental truths (or *affect* to deny them), not by a word which indicates the opposite of reason, but the opposite of faith,—Scepticism, Unbelief, Incredulity.

something, to one who reflects long enough upon it, inexpressibly whimsical in the questions which the mind is for ever putting to itself respecting itself; and to which the said mind returns from its dark caverns only an echo. We are apt, when we speculate about the mind, to forget for the moment, that it is at once the querist and the oracle; and to regard it as something *out* of itself, like a mineral in the hands of the analytic chemist. We cannot fully enter into the absurdities of its condition, except by remembering that it is our own wise selves who so grotesquely bewilder us. The mind, on such occasions, takes itself (if we may so speak) into its own hands, turns itself about as a savage would a watch, or a monkey a letter; interrogates itself, listens to the echo of its own voice, and is obliged, after all, to lay itself down again with a very puzzled expression — and acknowledge that of its very self, itself knows little or nothing! “I am material,” exclaims one of these whimsical beings, to whom the heaven-descended “Know thyself” would seem to have been ironically addressed. “No! — immaterial,” says another. “I am both material and immaterial,” exclaims, perhaps, the very same mind at different times. “Thought itself may be matter modified,” says one. “Rather,” says another of the same perplexed species, “matter is thought modified; for what you call matter is but a phenomenon.” “Both are independent and totally distinct substances, mysteriously, inexplicably conjoined,” says a third. “*How* they are conjoined we know no more than the dead. Not so much, perhaps.” “Do I ever *cease* to think,” says the mind to itself, “even in sleep? Is not my *essence* thought?” “You ought to know your own essence best,” all creation will reply. “I am confident,” says one, “that I never do cease to think, — not even in the soundest sleep.” “You do,

for a long time, every night of your life," exclaims another, equally confident and equally ignorant. "*Where* do I exist?" it goes on. "Am I in the brain? Am I in the whole body? Am I anywhere? Am I nowhere?" "I cannot have any local existence, for I know I am immaterial," says one. "I have a local existence, because I *am* material," says another. "I have a local existence, *though* I am *not* material," says a third. "Are my habitual actions voluntary," it exclaims, "however rapid they become; though I am unconscious of these volitions when they have attained a certain rapidity; or do I become a mere automaton as respects such actions? and therefore an automaton nine times out of ten, when I act at all? To this query two opposite answers are given by different minds; and by others, perhaps wiser, none at all; while, often, opposite answers are given by the same mind at different times. In like manner has every action, every operation, every emotion of the mind been made the subject of endless doubt and disputation. Surely if, as Soame Jenyns imagined, the infirmities of man, and even graver evils, are permitted in order to afford amusement to superior intelligences, and make the angels laugh, few things could afford them better sport than the perplexities of the child of clay engaged in the study of himself. "Alas!" exclaims at last the baffled spirit of this babe in intellect, as he surveys his shattered toys—his broken theories of metaphysics, "I know that I *am*; but *what* I am—*where* I am—even *how* I act; not only what is my essence, but what even my mode of operation,—of all this I *know* nothing; and, boast of reason as I may, all that I think on these points is matter of opinion—or is matter of faith!" He resembles, in fact, nothing so much as a kitten first introduced to its own image in a mirror: she runs to

the back of it, she leaps over it, she turns and twists, and jumps and frisks, in all directions, in the vain attempt to reach the fair illusion; and, at length, turns away in weariness from that incomprehensible enigma—the image of herself!

One would imagine—perhaps not untruly—that the Divine Creator had subjected us to these difficulties—and especially that incomprehensible *trilemma*,—that there is an union and interaction of two totally distinct substances, or that matter is but thought, or that thought is but matter,—one of which must be true, and all of which approach as near to mutual contradictions as can well be conceived,—for the very purpose of rebuking our presumption, and of teaching us humility; that He had left these obscurities at the very threshold—nay, within the very mansion of the mind itself,—for the express purpose of deterring man from playing the dogmatising fool when he looked abroad. Yet, in spite of his raggedness and poverty at home, no sooner does man look out of his dusky dwelling, than, like Goldsmith's little Beau, who, in his garret up five pair of stairs, boasts of his friendship with lords, he is apt to assume airs of magnificence, and, glancing at the Infinite through his little eye-glass, to affect an intimate acquaintance with the most respectable secrets of the universe!

It is undeniable, then, that the perplexities which uniformly puzzle man in the physical world, and even in the little world of his own mind, when he passes a certain limit, are just as unmanageable as those found in the moral constitution and government of the universe, or in the disclosures of the volume of Revelation. In both we find abundance of inexplicable difficulties; sometimes arising from our absolute ignorance, and perhaps quite as often from our partial knowledge. These difficulties are probably left on the

pages of both volumes for some of the same reasons ; many of them, it may be, because even the commentary of the Creator himself could not render them plain to a finite understanding, though a necessary and salutary exercise of our humility may be involved in their reception ; others, if not purely (which seems not probable) yet partly for the sake of exercising and training that humility, as an essential part of the education of a *child* ; others, surmountable, indeed, in the progress of knowledge and by prolonged effort of the human intellect, may be designed to stimulate that intellect to strenuous action and healthy effort — as well as to supply, in their solution, as time rolls on, an ever-accumulating mass of proofs of the profundity of the wisdom which has so far anticipated all the wisdom of man ; and of the divine origin of both the great books which he is privileged to study as a pupil, and even to illustrate as a commentator, — but the text of which he cannot alter.

But, for submitting to us many profound and insoluble problems, the second of the above reasons — the training of the intellect and heart of man to submission to the Supreme Intelligence — would alone be sufficient. For if, as is indicated by every thing in human nature, by the constitution of the world as adapted to that nature, and by the representations of Scripture, which are in analogy with both, the present world is but the school of man in this the childhood of his being, to prepare him for the enjoyment of an immortal manhood in another, everything might be expected to be subordinated to this great end ; and as the *end* of that education can be no other than an *enlightened obedience* to God, the harmonious and concurrent exercise of reason and faith becomes absolutely necessary : not of reason to the exclusion of faith, for otherwise there would be

no adequate test of man's docility and submission ; nor of a faith that would assert itself, not only independent of reason, but in contradiction to it, — for this would not be what God requires, and what alone can quadrature with that intelligent nature He has impressed on His offspring — a *reasonable* obedience. Implicit obedience, then, to the dictates of an all-perfect wisdom, exercised amidst many difficulties and perplexities, as so many tests of sincerity, and yet sustained by evidences which justify the conclusions which involve them, would seem to be the great object of man's moral education here ; and to vindicate both the partial evidence addressed to his reason, and the abundant difficulties which it leaves to his faith. "The evidence of religion," says Butler, "is fully sufficient for all the purposes of probation, how far soever it is from being satisfactory as to the purposes of curiosity, or any other : and, indeed, it answers the purposes of the former in several respects which it would not do if it were as over-bearing as is required."* Or as Pascal beautifully puts it : — "There is light enough for those whose sincere wish is to see, — and darkness enough to confound those of an opposite disposition."†

* "Analogy," part 2. chap. viii.

† "Pensées." Faugère's edition, tom. ii. p. 151. The views here developed will be found an expansion of some brief hints at the close of the article on Pascal's "Life and Genius" (Ed. Review, Jan. 1847), to which the want of space then rendered it impossible to do justice. The present opportunity is gladly seized, of pointing the attention of the reader to a tract of Archbishop Whately's, entitled "The Example of Children as proposed to Christians," which his Grace, having been struck with a coincidence between some of the thoughts in the tract and those expressed in the "Review," was so kind as to transmit to the present writer. Had he seen the tract before, he would have been glad to illustrate and confirm his own views by those of this highly gifted prelate. He earnestly recommends the tract in question (as well as the whole of the remarkable volume in which it is now incorporated, "Essays on some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion") to the perusal of the reader, and at the

As He "who spake as never man spake" is pleased often to illustrate the conduct of the Father of Spirits

same time ventures to express a conviction (having been led by the circumstances above mentioned to a fuller acquaintance with his Grace's theological writings than he had previously possessed) that though this lucid and eloquent writer may, for obvious reasons, be most widely known by his "Logic" and "Rhetoric," the time will come when his Theological works will be, if not more widely read, still more highly prized. To great powers of argument and illustration, and delightful transparency of diction and style, he adds a higher quality still—and a very rare quality it is—an evident and intense honesty of purpose, an absorbing desire to arrive at the *exact truth*, and to state it with perfect fairness and with the just limitations. Without pretending to agree with all that Archbishop Whately has written on the subject of Theology (though he carries his readers with him as frequently as any writer), it may be remarked that in relation to that whole class of subjects, to which the present essay has reference, there is no author of the present day whose contributions are more numerous or more valuable. The highly ingenious ironical *brochure*, entitled "Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte;" the Essays above mentioned, "On some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion;" those "On some of the Dangers to Christian Faith," and on the "Errors of Romanism;" the work on the "Kingdom of Christ," not to mention others, are well worthy of universal perusal. They abound in views both original and just, stated with all the author's aptness of illustration and transparency of language. It may be added, that in many of his *occasional* sermons, he has incidentally contributed many most beautiful fragments to that ever accumulating mass of internal evidence which the Scriptures themselves supply in their very structure, and which is evolved by diligent investigation of the relation and coherence of one part of them with another. It is also matter of congratulation that a small and unpretending, but very powerful, little tract, by the same writer, entitled "Introductory Lessons on Christian Evidences," has passed through many editions, has been translated into most of the European languages, and, amongst the rest, very recently into German, with an appropriate preface, by Professor Abeltzhauser, of the University of Dublin. That tract shows to demonstration that as much of the evidence of Christianity as is necessary for conviction may be made perfectly clear to the meanest capacity; and that, in spite of the assertions of Rome and of Oxford to the contrary, the apostolic injunction to *every* Christian to be ready to render a *reason* "for the hope that is in him,"—somewhat better than that *no* reason of the Hindoo or the Hottentot, that he believes what he is told, *without* any reason except that he is told it,—is an injunction possible to be obeyed

to his intelligent offspring by a reference to the conduct which flows from the relations of the human parent to *his* children, so the present subject admits of similar illustration. What God does with us in that process of moral education to which we have just adverted, is exactly what every wise parent endeavours to do with his children,—though by methods, as we may well judge, proportionably less perfect. Man, instinctively, or by reflection, adapts himself to the nature of his children; and seeing that only so far as it is justly trained can they be happy, makes the harmonious and concurrent development of their reason and their faith his object; he endeavours to teach them that without which they cannot be happy,—obedience, but a *reasonable* obedience. He gives them, in his general procedure and conduct, sufficient proofs of his superior knowledge, superior wisdom, and unchanging love; and secure in the general effect of this, he leaves them to receive by *faith* many things which he cannot explain to them if he would, till they get older; many things which he *can* only partially explain; and many others which he might more perfectly explain, but *will* not, partly as a test of their docility, and partly to invite and necessitate the healthy and energetic exercise of their reason in finding out the explanation for themselves. Confiding in the same general effect of his procedure and conduct, he does not hesitate, when the foresight of their ultimate welfare justifies it, to draw still more largely on their faith, in acts of apparent harshness and severity. Time, he knows, will show, though perhaps not till his yearning heart has ceased to beat for their welfare, that all that he did, he did in love. He knows, too, that if his lessons are taken aright, and his children become the good and happy men he wishes them to be, they will say, as they visit his sepulchre, and

recall with sorrow the once unappreciated love which animated him,—and perhaps with a sorrow, deeper still, remember the transient resentments caused by a salutary severity:—"He was indeed a friend; he corrected us not for his pleasure, but for our profit; and what we once thought was caprice or passion, we now *know* was love."

These analogies afford a true, though most imperfect, representation of the moral discipline to which Supreme Wisdom is subjecting us; and as men are accustomed to despair of any child with whom paternal experience and authority go for nothing, unless he can fully understand the intrinsic *reasons* for every *special* act of duty which that experience and authority dictate; as they are sure that he who has not learned to obey when young will never, when of age, know how to govern either himself or others; so a similar conduct in all the children of dust towards the Father of Spirits justifies a still more gloomy augury; inasmuch as the difference between the knowledge of man and the ignorance of a child, absolutely vanishes, in comparison with that interval which must ever subsist between the knowledge of the Eternal and the ignorance of man.

The remarks that have been made are not uncalled for in the present day. For, unfortunately, it is easy just now to detect in many classes of minds a tendency to divorce Reason from Faith, or Faith from Reason; and to proclaim that "what God hath joined together" shall henceforth exist in alienation. The old conflict between the claims of these two guiding principles of man (in no age wholly suppressed) is visibly renewed in our day; and the tendency in question is manifested in relation both to Natural Theology and to Revealed Religion. In relation to the latter especially, there are large classes amongst us who press the claims of Fa-

so far, that it would become, if they had their will, an utterly unreasonable faith ; some of whom do not scruple to speak slightly of the evidences which substantiate Christianity ; to decry and depreciate the study of them ; to pronounce that study unnecessary ; and in many cases even to insinuate their insufficiency. They are loud in the mean time in extolling a faith which, as Whatley truly observes, is no whit better than the faith of a heathen ; who has no other or better reason to offer for his religion than that his father told him it was true ! But this plainly is not the intelligent faith which, as we have seen, is everywhere inculcated and applauded in the Scriptures ; it is not that faith by which Christianity, appealing in the midst of a multitude of such traditional religions to palpable evidence addressed to men's senses and understandings (in a way no other religion ever did), everywhere destroyed the systems for which their votaries could only say that their fathers told them they were true. And yet this blind belief in such tradition, many advocates of Christianity would now enjoin us to imitate ! It might have occurred to them, one would think, that, on their principles, Christianity never could have succeeded ; for every mind must have been hopelessly pre-occupied against all examination of its claims. It is, indeed, incomparably better that a man should be a sincere Christian even by an utterly unreasoning and passive faith (if that be possible), than no Christian at all ; yet at the best, such a man is a possessor of the truth only by accident. He ought to have, and, if he be a sincere disciple of truth, will seek, some more solid grounds for holding it. It is but too obvious, however, that the disposition in many to enjoin this obsequious mood of mind is prompted by a strong desire to revive the ancient empire of priest-craft and the pretensions of ecclesiastical despotism ;

to secure re-admission amongst mankind of extravagant and preposterous claims, which their advocates are sadly conscious rest on no solid foundation. They feel that as reason is not *with* them, it must be *against* them; and reason therefore they are determined to exclude.

But the experience of the present "developments" of Oxford teaching may serve to show us how infinitely perilous is this course; and how fearfully, both outraged reason and outraged faith will avenge the wrongs done them by their alienation and disjunction. Those results, indeed, we predicted in 1843; before a single leader of the Oxford school had gone over to Rome, and before any tendencies to the opposite extreme of Scepticism had manifested themselves. We then affirmed that, on the one hand, those who were contending for the corruptions of the fourth century could not possibly find footing there, but must inevitably seek their ultimate resting-place in Rome—a prediction which has been too amply fulfilled; and that, on the other, the extravagant pretensions put forth on behalf of an uninquiring faith, and the desperate assertion that the "evidence for Christianity" was no stronger than that for "Church Principles," must, by reaction, lead on to an outbreak of infidelity. That prophecy, too, has been to the letter accomplished. Our words were,— "We have seen it recently asserted by some of the Oxford school that there is as much reason for rejecting the most essential doctrines of Christianity—nay Christianity itself—as for rejecting their 'church principles.' That, in short, we have as much reason for being infidels as for rejecting the doctrine of Apostolical succession! What other effect such reasoning can have than that of compelling men to believe that there is nothing between infidelity and popery, and of urging them to make a selection

between the two, we know not. . . . Indeed, we fully expect that, as a reaction of the present extravagances, of the revival of obsolete superstition, we shall have ere long to fight over again the battle with a modified form of infidelity, as now with a modified form of popery. Thus, probably, for some time to come, will the human mind continue to oscillate between the extremes of error ; but with a diminished arc at each vibration ; until truth shall at last prevail, and compel it to repose in the centre.”*

The offensive displays of self-sufficiency and flippancy, of ignorance and presumption, found in the productions of the apostles of the new infidelity of Oxford, (of which we shall have a few words to say by-and-by) are the natural and instructive, though most painful, result of attempting to give predominance to one principle of our nature, where two or more are designed reciprocally to guard and check each other ; and such results must ever follow such attempts. The excellence of man — so complexly constituted is his nature — must consist in the harmonious action and proper balance of all the constituents of that nature ; the equilibrium he sighs for must be the result of the combined action of forces operating in different directions ; of his reason, his faith, his appetites, his affections, his emotions ; when these operate each in due proportion, then, and then only, can he be at rest. It may, indeed, transcend any calculus of man to estimate exactly the several elements in this complicated polygon of forces ; but we are at least sure that, if any one principle be so developed as to supersede another, no safe equipoise will be attained. We all know familiarly enough that this is the case when the affections or the appetites are more powerful

* Oxford Tract School, Ed. Rev., April, 1843.

than the reason and the conscience, instead of being in subjection to them: but it is not less the case, though the result is not so palpable, when reason and faith either exclude one another, or trench on each other's domain; when one is pampered and the other starved.* Hence the perils attendant upon their attempted separation, and the ruin which results from their actual alienation and hostility. There is no depth of dreary superstition into which men may not sink in the one case, and no extravagance of ignorant presumption to which they may not soar in the other. It is only by the mutual and alternate action of these different forces that man can safely navigate his little bark through the narrow straits and by the dangerous rocks which impede his course; and if Faith spread not the sail to the breeze, or if Reason desert the helm, we are in equal peril.

If it be said that this is a disconsolate and dreary doctrine; that man seeks and needs a simpler navigation than this troublesome and intricate course, by star and chart, compass and lead line; and that this responsibility, of ever

“Sounding on his dim and perilous way,”

is too grave for so feeble a nature; we answer that such is his actual condition. This is a plain matter of fact which cannot be denied. The various principles of his constitution, and his position in relation to the external world, obviously and absolutely subject him to this very responsibility throughout his whole course

* It has been our lot to meet with disciples of the Oxford Tract School, who have, by a fatal indulgence of an appetite of belief, brought themselves to believe any mediæval miracle, nay, any ghost story, without examination; saying, with a solemn face, “It is better to believe than to reason.” They at last believe as they *will* to believe; and thus is reason avenged. Reason, similarly indulged, believes, with Mr. Foxton and Mr. Froude, that a miracle is even an *impossibility*; and this is the “Nemesis” of faith.

in this life. It is never remitted or abated : resolves are necessitated upon imperfect evidence ; and action imperatively demanded amidst doubts and difficulties in which reason is not satisfied, and faith is required. To argue, therefore, that God cannot have left man to such uncertainty, is to argue, as the pertinacious lawyer did, who, on seeing a man in the stocks, asked him what he was placed there for ; and on being told, said, " They cannot put you there for *that*." " But I *am* here," was the laconic answer.

The analogy, then, of man's whole condition in this life might lead us to expect the same system of procedure throughout ; that the evidence which substantiates *religious* truth, and claims *religious* action, would involve this responsibility as well as that which substantiates *other* kinds of truth, and demands *other* kinds of action. And after all, what else, in either case, could answer the purpose, *if* (as already said) this world be the school of training of man's moral nature ? How else could the discipline of his faculties, the exercise of patience, humility, and fortitude, be secured ? How, except amidst a state of things less than certainty—whether under the form of that passive faith which *mimics* the possession of absolute certainty, or absolute certainty itself—could man's nature be trained to combined self-reliance and self-distrust, circumspection and resolution, and, above all, to confidence in God ? Man cannot be nursed and dandled into the manhood of his nature, by that unthinking faith which leaves no doubts to be felt, and no objections to be weighed ; Nor can his docility ever be tested, if he is never called upon to believe any thing which it would not be an absurdity and contradiction to deny. This species of responsibility, then, not only cannot be dispensed with, but is absolutely necessary ; and, consequently, however desirable may appear that

short path to certainty which a pretended infallibility* promises to man, or that equally short path which leads to the same termination, by telling us that we are to believe nothing which we cannot *demonstrate* to be true, or which, *à priori*, we may presume to be false,—either path must be one which leads astray. In the one case, how can the “*reasonable service*” which Scripture demands—the enlightened love and conscientious investigation of *truth*—its reception, not without doubts, but against doubts—how could all this co-exist with a faith which presents the whole sum of religion in the formulary, “I am to believe without a doubt, and perform without hesitation, whatever my guide, Parson A., tells me?” Not that, even in that case (as has often been shown), the man would be relieved from the necessity of absolutely depending on the dreaded exercise of his private judgment; for (unless each man is to remit his religion wholly to the accident of his birth) he must at least have exercised it once for all, and that on two of the most arduous of all questions: first, *which* of several churches, pretending to infallibility, is truly infallible? and next, whether the man may infallibly regard his worthy Parson A. as an infallible expounder of that infallibility? But, supposing this stupendous difficulty surmounted, though *then*, it is true, all may seem genuine faith, in reality there is none. Where absolute infallibility is *supposed* to have been attained (even though erroneously), faith, in strict propriety

* See Archbishop Whately's admirable discourse, entitled “The Search after Infallibility, considered in reference to the Danger of Religious Errors arising within the Church, in the primitive as well as in later Ages.” He here makes excellent use of the fruitful principle of Butler's great work, by showing that, however *desirable*, *à priori*, an infallible guide would seem to fallible man, God *in fact* has every where denied it; and that in denying it in relation to religion, he has acted only as he always acts.

—certainly *that* faith which is alone of any value as an instrument of men's moral training,—which recognises and intelligently struggles with objections and difficulties—is impossible. Men may be said, in such case, to *know*, but can hardly be said to believe. Before Columbus had seen America, he *believed* in its existence ; but when he *had* seen it, his faith became knowledge. Equally impossible, and for the same reason, is any place for faith on the opposite hypothesis ; for if man is to believe nothing but what his reason can comprehend, and to act only upon evidence which amounts to certainty, the same paradox is true ; for when there is no reason to doubt, there can be none to believe. Faith ever stands between conflicting probabilities ; but her position is (if we may use the metaphor) the centre of gravity between them, and will be proportionally nearer the greater mass.

In the mean time that arduous responsibility which attaches to man, and which is obviated neither by an implicit faith in a human infallibility, nor an exclusive reference of that faith to cases in which reason is synonymous with demonstration, that is, to cases which leave no room for faith, is at once relieved, and effectually relieved, by the maxim—the key-stone of ethical truth—that only voluntary error condemns us ;—that all we are really responsible for, is a faithful, honest, patient, investigation and weighing of evidence, as far as our abilities and opportunities admit, and a conscientious pursuit of what we honestly deem truth, wherever it may lead us. We concede that a really dispassionate and patient conduct in this respect is what man is too ready to assume he has practised,—and this fallacy cannot be too sedulously guarded against. But that guilty liability to self-deception does not militate against the truth of the representation now made. It is his *duty* to see that he does not abuse

the maxim,—that he does not rashly acquiesce in any conclusion that he *wishes* to be true, or which he is too lazy to examine. If all *possible* diligence and honesty have been exerted in the search, the statement of Chillingworth, bold as it is, we should not hesitate to adopt, in all the vigour of his own language. It is to the effect, that if “in him alone there were a confluence of all the errors which have befallen the sincere professors of Christianity, he should not be so much afraid of them, as to ask God’s pardon for them;” absolutely involuntary error being justly regarded by him as blameless.

On the other hand, from the natural relations of truth with the constitution of the mind of man, it may well be affirmed, that, with the exception of a very few cases of obliquity of intellect, which may safely be left to the merciful interpretations and apologies of Him who created such intellects, those who thus honestly and industriously “seek” shall “find;”—not all truth, indeed, but enough to secure their safety; and that whatever remaining errors may infest and disfigure the truth they have attained, these shall not be imputed to them for sin. According to the image which apostolic eloquence has employed, the baser materials which unavoidable haste, prejudice, and ignorance may have incorporated with the gold of the edifice, will be consumed by that fire which “will try every man’s work of what sort it is,” but he himself will be saved amidst those purifying flames. Like the bark which contained the Apostle and the fortunes of the Gospel, the frail vessel may go to pieces on the rocks, but “by boat or plank” the voyager himself shall “get safe to shore.”

It is amply sufficient, then, to lighten our responsibility, that we are answerable only for our honest endeavours to discover and to practise the truth; and,

in fact, the responsibility is principally felt to be irksome, and man is so prompt by devices of his own to escape from it, not on account of any intrinsic difficulty which remains after the above limitations are admitted, but because he wishes to be exempted from the very necessity of patient and honest investigation. It is not so much the difficulty of *finding* as the trouble of *seeking* the truth, from which he shrinks; a necessity, however, from which, as it is an essential instrument of his moral education and discipline, he can never be released.

If the previous representations be true, the conditions of that intelligent faith which God requires from his intelligent offspring may be fairly inferred to be such as we have already stated;—that the evidence for the truths we are to believe shall be, first, such as our faculties are competent to appreciate, and against which, therefore, the mere negative argument, arising from our ignorance of the true solution of such difficulties as are perhaps insoluble because we are finite, can be no reply; and, secondly, such an amount of this evidence as shall fairly overbalance all the objections which we *can* appreciate. This is the condition to which God has obviously subjected us as inhabitants of this world; and it is on such evidence we are here perpetually acting. We now believe a thousand things we cannot fully comprehend. We may not see the *intrinsic* evidence of their truth; but their *extrinsic* evidence is sufficient to induce us unhesitatingly to believe, and to act upon them. When that evidence is sufficient in amount, we allow it to overbear *all* the individual difficulties and perplexities which encompass the truths to which it is applied, unless, indeed, such difficulties can be *proved* to involve absolute contradictions; for these, of course, no evidence can substantiate. For example, in a multitude

of cases, a certain combination of merely circumstantial evidence in favour of a certain judicial decision, is familiarly allowed to vanquish all apparent discrepancy on particular and subordinate points;—the want of concurrence in the evidence of the witnesses on such points shall not cause a shadow of a doubt as to the conclusion. For we feel that it is far more improbable that the conclusion should be untrue, than that the difficulty we cannot solve is truly incapable of a solution; and when the evidence reaches this point the objection no longer troubles us.

It is the same with historic investigations. There are ten thousand facts in history which no one doubts, though the narrators of them may materially vary in their version, and though some of the circumstances alleged may be in appearance inexplicable. But the last thing a man would think of doing, in such cases, would be to neglect the preponderant evidence on account of the residuum of insoluble objections. He does not, in short, allow his ignorance to control his knowledge, nor the evidence which he has not got to destroy what he has; and the less so, that experience has taught him that in many cases such apparent difficulties have been cleared up, in the course of time and by the progress of knowledge, and proved to be contradictions in appearance only.

It is the same with the conclusions of natural philosophy, when well proved by experiment, however unaccountable for awhile may be the discrepancy with apparently opposing phenomena. No one disbelieves the Copernican theory now; though thousands did for awhile, on what they believed the irrefragable evidence of their senses. Now, let us only suppose the Copernican theory not to have been discovered by human reason, but made known by revelation, and its reception enjoined on faith, leaving the apparent inconsist-

ency with the evidence of the senses just as it was. Many, no doubt, would have said that no such evidence *could* justify them in disbelieving their own eyes, and that such an insoluble objection was sufficient to overturn the evidence. Yet we now see, in point of fact, that it is not only possible, but true, that the objection was apparent only, and admitted of a complete solution. Thousands accordingly take this for granted, without seeing it; they receive philosophy—this very philosophy—on testimony which apparently contradicts their senses, without even yet knowing more of it than if it *were* revealed from heaven. This gives too much reason to suspect, that in other and higher cases the *will* has much to do with human scepticism. Nor do we well know what multitudes, who neglect religion on account of the alleged uncertainty of its evidence, could reply, if God were to say to them, “And yet on *such* evidence, and that far inferior in degree, you have never hesitated to *act*, when your own temporal interests were concerned. You never feared to commit the bark of your worldly fortunes to that fluctuating element. In many cases you believed on the testimony of others what seemed even to contradict your own senses. Why were you so much more scrupulous in relation to *ME*?”

The above examples are fair illustrations, we venture to think, of the conditions under which we are required to believe the far higher truths, attended no doubt with great difficulties, which are authenticated in the pages of the two volumes (Nature and Scripture) which God has put into our hands to study; of the conditions to which He subjects us in training us for a future state, and developing in us the twofold perfection involved in the words “a reasonable faith.” If the considerations just urged were duly borne in mind, we cannot help thinking that they would afford (where any modesty remained) an answer to most of

those forms of unbelief which, from time to time, rise up in the world, and not least in our own day. These are usually founded on one or more supposed insoluble objections, arising out of our ignorance. The probability that they *are* incapable of solution is rashly assumed, and made to overbear the far stronger probability arising from the positive and appreciable evidence which substantiates the truths involving those difficulties: a course the more unreasonable inasmuch as — first, many such difficulties might be *expected*; and, secondly, in analogous cases, we see that many such difficulties have in time disappeared. On the other hand, it is, no doubt, much more easy to insist on individual objections, which no man can effectually answer, than it is to appreciate at once the *total effect* of many lines of argument and many sources of evidence, all bearing on one point. That difficulty was long ago beautifully stated by Butler*, in a passage well worthy of the reader's perusal; and, as Pascal had observed before him, not only is it difficult, but impossible, for the human mind to *retain* the impression of a large combination of evidence, even if it could for a moment fully realise the collective *effect* of the whole. But it cannot do even this, any more than the eye can take in at once, in mass and detail, the objects of an extensive landscape.

Let us now be permitted briefly to apply the preceding

* "The truth of our religion, like the truth of common matters, is to be judged of by all the evidence taken together. And, unless the whole series of things which may be alleged in this argument, and every particular thing in it, can reasonably be supposed to have been by accident (for here the stress of the argument for Christianity lies), then is the truth of it proved. . . . It is obvious how much advantage the nature of this evidence gives to those persons who attack Christianity, especially in conversation. For it is easy to show, in a short and lively manner, that such and such things are liable to objection, but impossible to show, in like manner, the united force of the whole argument in one view."—*Analogy*, part II. chap. vii.

principles to two of the most momentous controversies which have exercised the minds of men ; that which relates to the existence of God, and that which relates to the truth of Christianity ; in both of which, if we mistake not, man's position is precisely similar. He is placed amidst evidence abundantly sufficient to justify his reasonable faith, and yet beset with difficulties abundantly sufficient to baffle an indocile reason.

Without entering into the many different sources of argument for the existence of a Supreme Intelligence, we shall only refer to that proof on which all theists, savage and civilised, in some form or other, rely—the traces of an “eternal power and godhead” in the visible creation. The argument depends on a principle which, whatever may be its metaphysical history or origin, is one which man perpetually recognises, which every act of his own consciousness verifies, which he applies fearlessly to every phenomenon, known or unknown ; and it is this,—That every effect has a cause (though he knows nothing of their connexion), and that effects which bear marks of design have a designing cause. This principle is so familiar, that if he were to affect to doubt it, in any *practical* case in human life, he would only be laughed at as a fool, or pitied as insane. The evidence, then, which substantiates the greatest and first of truths mainly depends on a principle perfectly familiar and perfectly recognised. Man can estimate the *nature* of that evidence ; and the *amount* of it, in this instance, he sees to be as vast as the sum of created objects ;—nay, far more ; for it is as vast as the sum of their relations. So that if (as is apt to be the case) the difficulties of realising this tremendous truth are in proportion to the extent of knowledge and the powers of reflection, the evidence man can perfectly appreciate is cumulative in an equal or still higher proportion.

Obvious as are the marks of design in each individual object, the sum of proof is not merely the sum of such indications, but that sum infinitely multiplied by the relations established and preserved amongst all these objects ; by the adjustment which harmonises them all into one system, and impresses on all the parts of the universe a palpable order and subordination. While even in a single part of an organised being (as a hand or an eye) the traces of design are not to be mistaken, these are indefinitely multiplied by similar proofs of contrivance in the many individual organs of one such being—as of an entire animal or vegetable. These are yet to be multiplied by the harmonious relations which are established of mutual proportion and subserviency amongst all the organs of any one such being : And as many beings even of that one species or class as there are, so many multiples are there of the same proofs. Similar indications yield similar proofs of design in each individual *part*, and in the *whole* individual of *all* the individuals of every other class of beings ; and this sum of proof is again to be multiplied by the proofs of design in the adjustment and mutual dependence and subordination of each of these *classes* of organised beings to every other, and to all ; of the vegetable to the animal—of the lower animal to the higher. Their magnitudes, numbers, physical force, faculties, functions, duration of life, rates of multiplication and development, sources of subsistence, must all have been determined in exact ratios, and could not transgress certain limits without involving the whole universe in confusion. This amazing sum of probabilities is yet to be further augmented by the fact that all these classes of organised substances are intimately related to those great elements of the material world in which they live, to which they are adapted, and which are adapted to

them ; that all of them are subject to the influence of certain mighty and subtle agencies which pervade all nature,—and which are of such tremendous potency, that any *chance* error in their proportions of activity would be sufficient to destroy all, and which yet are exquisitely balanced and inscrutably harmonised.

The proofs of design arising from the relations thus maintained between all the parts, from the most minute to the most vast, of our own world, are still to be further multiplied by the inconceivably momentous relations subsisting between our own and other planets and their common centre ; amidst whose sublime and solemn phenomena science has most clearly discovered that every thing is accurately adjusted by geometrical precision of force and movement ; where the *chances* of error are infinite, and the proofs of intelligence, therefore, equal. These proofs of design in each fragment of the universe, and in all combined, are continually further multiplied by every fresh discovery, whether in the minute or the vast — by the microscope or the telescope ; for every fresh law that is discovered, being in harmony with all that has previously been discovered, not only yields its own proof of design, but infinitely more, by all the relations in which it stands to other laws : it yields, in fact, as many as there are adjustments which have been effected between itself and all besides. Each new proof of design, therefore, is not a solitary fact ; but one which, entering as another element into a most complex machinery, indefinitely multiplies the combinations, in any one of which chance might have gone astray. From this infinite array of proofs of design, it seems to man's reason, in ordinary moods, stark madness to account for the phenomena of the universe upon any other supposition than that which does account, and can alone account, for them all,—the supposition of a

Presiding Intelligence, illimitable alike in power and in wisdom.

The only difficulty is justly to appreciate such an argument—to obtain a sufficiently vivid impression of such an accumulation of probabilities. This very difficulty, indeed, in some moods, may minister to a temporary doubt. For let us catch man in those moods,—perhaps after long meditation on the metaphysical grounds of human belief,—and he begins half to doubt, with unusual modesty, whether the child of dust is warranted to conclude *any thing* on a subject which loses itself in the infinite, and which so far transcends all his powers of apprehension; he begins half to doubt, with Hume, whether he can reason analogically from the petty specimens of human ingenuity to phenomena so vast and so unique; a misgiving which is strengthened by reflecting on all those to him incomprehensible inferences to which the *admission* of the argument leads him, and which seem almost to involve contradictions. Let him ponder for awhile the difficulties involved in the notion of Self-subsistence, Eternity, Creation; of Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, so unlimited as to embrace at once all things, and all their relations, actual and possible,—this “unlimited” expanding into a dim apprehension of the “infinite”;—of infinitude of attributes, omnipresent in every point of space, and yet but one and not many infinitudes;—let him once humbly ponder such incomprehensible difficulties as these, and he will soon feel that though in the argument from design there seemed but one vast scene of triumph for his reason, there is as large a scene of exertion left for his faith. That faith he ordinarily yields; he sees it is justified by those proofs of the great truth he can appreciate, and which he will not allow to be controlled by the difficulties his conscious feebleness cannot solve; and the rather, that

he sees that if he does *not* accept that evidence, he has equally incomprehensible difficulties still to encounter, and two or three stark contradictions into the bargain. His reason, therefore, triumphs in the proofs, and his faith triumphs over the difficulties.

It is the same with the doctrine of the divine government of the world. In ordinary states of mind man counts it an absurdity to suppose that the Deity would have created a world to abandon it; that, having employed wisdom and power so vast in its construction, he would leave it to be the sport of chance. He feels that the intuitions of right and wrong; the voice of conscience; satisfaction in well-doing; remorse for crime; the present *tendency*, at least, of the laws of the universe—all point to the same conclusion, while their imperfect fulfilment equally points to a future and more accurate adjustment. Yet let the man look exclusively for awhile on the opposite side of the tapestry; let him brood over any of the facts which seem at war with the above conclusion; on some signal triumph of baseness and malignity; on oppressed virtue, on triumphant vice; on “the wicked spreading himself like a green bay tree;” and especially on the mournful and inscrutable mystery of the “Origin of Evil,” and he feels that “clouds and darkness” envelope the administration of the Moral Governor, though doubtless “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” The evidences above mentioned for the last conclusion are direct and positive, and such as man can appreciate; the difficulties spring from his limited capacity, or imperfect glimpses of a very small segment of the universal plan. Nor are those difficulties less upon the opposite hypothesis; and they are there further burdened with two or three additional absurdities. The preponderant evidence, far from removing the difficulties, scarcely touches

them; yet it is felt to be sufficient to *justify* faith, though most abundant faith is required still.

Are the evidences, then, in behalf of Christianity, *less* of a nature which man can appreciate? or *can* the difficulties involved in its reception be greater than in the preceding cases? If not, and if, moreover, while the evidence turns as before on principles with which we are familiar, the more formidable objections, as before, are such that we are not competent to decide upon their absolute insolubility, we see how man ought to act; that is, not to let his ignorance control his knowledge, but to let his reason accept the proofs which justify his faith in accepting the difficulties. In no case is he, it appears, warranted to look for the certainty which shall exclude (whatever the triumphs of his reason) a gigantic exercise of his faith. Let us briefly consider a few of the evidences. And in order to give the statement a little novelty, we shall indicate the principal topics of evidence, not by enumerating what the advocate of Christianity believes in believing it to be true, but what the infidel *must* believe in believing it to be false. The *à priori* objection to Miracles we shall briefly touch afterwards.

First, then, in relation to the Miracles of the New Testament, whether they be supposed masterly frauds on men's senses committed at the time and by the parties supposed in the records, or fictions (designed or accidental) subsequently fabricated—but still, in either case, undeniably successful and triumphant beyond all else in the history whether of fraud or fiction,—the infidel must believe as follows: On the *first* hypothesis, he must believe that a vast number of apparent miracles—involving the most astounding phenomena—such as the instant restoration of the sick, blind, deaf, and lame, and the resurrection of the dead—performed in open day, amidst multitudes of malig-

nant enemies—imposed alike on *all*, and triumphed at once over the strongest prejudices and the deepest enmity;—those who received them and those who rejected them differing only in the certainly not very trifling particular, as to whether they came from heaven or from hell. He must believe that those who were thus successful in this extraordinary conspiracy against men's senses and against common sense, were Galilæan Jews, such as all history of the period represents them; ignorant, obscure, illiterate; and, above all, previously bigoted, like all their countrymen, to the very system, of which, together with all other religions on the earth, they modestly meditated the abrogation; he must believe that, appealing to these astounding frauds in the face both of Jews and Gentiles as an open evidence of the truth of a new revelation, and demanding on the strength of them that *their* countrymen should surrender a religion which they acknowledged to be divine, and that all other nations should abandon their scarcely less venerable systems of superstition, they rapidly succeeded in both these very probable adventures; and in a few years, though without arms, power, wealth, or science, were to an enormous extent victorious over all prejudice, philosophy, and persecution; and in three centuries took nearly undisputed possession, amongst many nations, of the temples of the ejected deities. He must farther believe that the original performers, in these prodigious frauds on the world, acted not only without any assignable motive, but against all assignable motive; that they maintained this uniform constancy in unprofitable falsehoods, not only together, but separately, in different countries, before different tribunals, under all sorts of examinations and cross-examinations, and in defiance of the gyves, the scourge, the axe, the cross, the stake. that those whom they per-

suaded to join their enterprise, persisted like themselves in the same obstinate belief of the same "cunningly devised" frauds; and though they had many accomplices in their singular conspiracy, had the equally singular fortune to free themselves and their coadjutors from all transient weakness towards their cause and treachery towards one another; and, lastly, that these men, having, amidst all their ignorance, originality enough to invent the most pure and sublime system of morality which the world has ever listened to, had, amidst all their conscious villany, the effrontery to preach it, and, which is more extraordinary, the inconsistency to practise it!*

On the *second* of the above-mentioned hypotheses, that these miracles were either a congeries of deeply contrived fictions, or accidental myths, subsequently fabricated, the infidel must believe, on the *former* supposition, that, though even transient success in literary forgery, when there are any prejudices to resist, is among the rarest of occurrences; yet that *these* forgeries—the hazardous work of many minds, making the most outrageous pretensions, and necessarily challenging the opposition of Jew and Gentile, were successful, beyond all imagination, over the hearts of mankind; and have continued to impose, by an exquisite appearance of artless truth, and a most elaborate mosaic of feigned events artfully cemented into the ground of true history, on the acutest minds of different races and different ages; while, on the *second* supposition, he must believe that accident and chance have given to these legends their exquisite appear-

* So far as we have any knowledge from history, this must have been the case; and Gibbon fully admits and insists upon it. Indeed, no infidel hypothesis can afford to do without the virtues of the early Christians in accounting for the success of the falsehoods of Christianity. Hard alternatives of a wayward hypothesis!

ance of historic plausibility ; and on *either* supposition, he must believe (what is infinitely more wonderful) that the world, while the fictions were being published, and in the known absence of the facts they asserted to be true, suffered itself to be befooled *into* the belief of their truth, and *out* of its belief of all the systems it *did* previously believe to be true ; and that it acted thus notwithstanding persecution from without, as well as prejudice from within ; that, strange to say, the strictest historic investigations bring this compilation of fictions or myths—even by the admission of Strauss himself—within thirty or forty years of the very time in which all the alleged wonders they relate are said to have occurred ; wonders which the perverse world knew it had *not* seen, but which it was determined to believe, in spite of evidence, prejudice, and persecution ! In addition to all this, the infidel must believe that the men who were engaged in the compilation of these monstrous fictions, chose them as the vehicle of the purest morality ; and, though the most pernicious deceivers of mankind, were yet the most scrupulous preachers of veracity and benevolence ! Surely of him, who can receive all these paradoxes—and they form but a small part of what might be mentioned—we may say, “ O infidel, great is thy Faith ! ”

On the supposition that neither of these theories, whether of fraud or fiction, will account, if taken by itself, for the whole of the supernatural phenomena, which strew the pages of the New Testament, then the objector, who relies on *both*, must believe, in turn, *both* sets of the above paradoxes ; and then, with still more reason than before, may we exclaim, “ O infidel, great is thy Faith ! ”

Again ; he must believe that *all* those apparent coincidences, which *seem* to connect Prophecy with the *facts* of the origin and history of Christianity,—some,

embracing events too vast for hazardous speculation, and others, incidents too minute for it,—are purely fortuitous; that *all* the cases in which the event seems to tally with the prediction, are mere chance coincidences: and he must believe this, amongst other events, of two of the most *unlikely* to which human sagacity was *likely* to pledge itself, and yet which have as undeniably occurred, (and *after* the predictions) as they were *à priori* improbable and anomalous in the world's history! The one is, that the Jews should exist as a distinct nation in the very bosom of all other nations, without extinction and without amalgamation,—other nations and even races having so readily melted away under less than half the influences which have been at work upon them*; the other, an opposite paradox,—that a religion, propagated by ignorant, obscure, and penniless vagabonds, should diffuse itself amongst the most diverse nations in spite of all opposition,—it being the rarest of phenomena to find *any* religion which is capable of transcending the limits of race, clime, and the scene of its historic origin; a religion which, if transplanted, will not die; a religion which is more than a local or national growth of superstition! That *such* a religion as Christianity should so easily break these barriers, and though supposed to be cradled in ignorance, fanaticism, and fraud, should,

* The case of the Gipsies, often alleged as a parallel, is a ludicrous evasion of the argument. These few and scattered vagabonds, whose very safety has been obscurity and contempt, have never attracted towards them a thousandth part of the attention, or the hundred thousandth part of the cruelties, which have been directed against the Jews. Had it been otherwise, they would long since have melted away from every country in Europe. We repeat that the existence of a nation for 1800 years in the bosom of all nations, conquered and persecuted, yet never extinguished, and the propagation of a religion amongst *different* races without force, and even against it,—are both, so far as known, paradoxes in history.

without force of arms, and in the face of persecution, "ride forth conquering and to conquer" through a long career of victories, defying the power of kings, and emptying the temples of deities,—who, but an *infidel*, has *faith* enough to believe?*

Once more; if, from the external evidences of this religion, we pass to those which the only records by which we know any thing of its nature and origin supplies, the infidel must believe, amongst other paradoxes, that it is *probable* that a knot of obscure and despised plebeians—regarded as the scum of a nation which was itself regarded as the scum of all other nations—originated the purest, most elevated, and most *influential* theory of ethics the world has ever seen; that a system of sublimest truth, expressed with unparalleled simplicity, sprang from ignorance; that precepts enjoining the most refined sanctity were inculcated by imposture; that the first injunctions to universal love broke from the lips of bigotry! He must further believe that these men exemplified the ideal perfection of that beautiful system in the most unique, original, and faultless picture of virtue ever conceived—a picture which has extorted the admiration even of those who could not believe it to be a *portrait*, and who have yet confessed themselves unable to account for it *except* as such.† He must believe,

* "They may say," says Butler, "that the conformity between the prophecies and the event is by accident; but there are many instances in which such conformity itself cannot be denied." His whole remarks on the subject, and especially those on the *impression* to be derived from the *multitude* of apparent coincidences, in a long series of prophecies, some vast, some minute; and the improbability of their all being accidental, are worthy of his comprehensive genius. It is on the effect of the whole, not on single coincidences, that the argument depends.

† To Christ alone, of all the characters ever portrayed to man, belongs that assemblage of qualities which *equally* attract love and veneration; to him alone belong in perfection those rare traits

too, that these ignorant and fraudulent Galilæans voluntarily aggravated the difficulty of their task, by exhibiting their proposed ideal, not by bare enumeration and description of qualities, but by the most arduous of all methods of representation—that of dramatic action; and, what is more, that they succeeded; that in that representation they undertook to make him act with sublime consistency in scenes of the most extraordinary character and the most touching pathos, and utter moral truth in the most exquisite fictions in which such truth was ever embodied; and that again they succeeded; that so ineffably rich in genius were these obscure wretches, that no less than *four* of them were found equal to this intellectual achievement; and while each has told many events, and given many traits which the others have omitted, that they have all performed their task in the same unique style of invention and the same unearthly tone of art; that one and all, while preserving each his own individuality, has, nevertheless, attained a certain majestic simplicity of style unlike any thing else (not only in any writings of their own nation, *except* their alleged sacred writings, and infinitely superior to any thing which their successors, Jews or Christians, though with the advantage of these models, could ever attain,) but, unlike any acknowledged human writings in the world, and possessing the singular property of being capable of ready transfusion, without the loss of a thought or a grace, into every language spoken by man: he must believe that these fabricators of fiction, in common

which the Roman historian, with affectionate flattery, attributes too absolutely to the merely mortal object of his eulogy: “*Nec illi, quod est rarissimum, aut facilitas auctoritatem, aut severitas amorem, deminuit.*” Still more beautiful is the Apostle’s description of superiority to all human failings, with ineffable pity for human sorrows: “He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, though without sin.”

with the many other contributors to the New Testament, most insanelly added to the difficulty of their task by delivering the whole in fragments and in the most various kinds of composition,—in biography, history, travels, and familiar letters; incorporating and interfusing with the whole an amazing number of minute facts, historic allusions, and specific references to persons, places, and dates, as if for the very purpose of supplying posterity with the easy means of detecting their impositions: he must believe that, in spite of their thus encountering what Paley calls the “danger of scattering names and circumstances in writings where nothing but truth can preserve consistency,” they so happily succeeded, that whole volumes have been employed in pointing out their latent and often most recondite congruities; many of them lying so deep, and coming out after such comparison of various passages and collateral lights, that they could never have answered the purposes of fraud, even if the most prodigious genius for fraud had been equal to the fabrication; congruities which, in fact, were never suspected to exist till they were expressly elicited by the attacks of infidelity, and were evidently never thought of by the writers; he must believe that they were profoundly sagacious enough to construct such a fabric of artful harmonies, and yet such simpletons as, by doing infinitely more than was necessary, to encounter infinite risks of detection, to no purpose; sagacious enough to out-do all that sagacity has ever done, as shown by the effects, and yet not sagacious enough to be merely *specious*: and finally, he must believe that these illiterate impostors had the art, in all their various writings, which evidently proceed from different minds, to preserve the same inimitable marks of reality, truth, and nature in their narrations—the miraculous and the ordinary alike—and to

assume and preserve, with infinite ease, amidst their infinite impostures, the tone and air of undissembled earnestness.*

If, on the other hand, he supposes that all the congruities of which we have spoken, were the effect not of fraudulent design, but of happy accident,—that these *myths* arranged themselves in spontaneous harmony—he must believe that chance has done what even the most prodigious powers of invention could not do.

Once more ; he must believe that these same illiterate men, who were capable of so much, were also capable of projecting a system of doctrine singularly remote from all ordinary and previous speculation ; of discerning the necessity of taking under their special patronage those *passive* virtues which man least loved, and found it most difficult to cultivate ; and of exhibiting, in their preference of the spiritual to the ceremonial, and their treatment of many of the most delicate questions of practical ethics and casuistry, a justness and elevation of sentiment as alien as possible from the superstition and fanaticism of their predecessors who had corrupted the Law, and the superstition and fanaticism of their followers, who very soon corrupted the Gospel ; that they, and they alone, rose above the strong tendencies to the extravagances which had been so conspicuous during the past, and were soon to be as conspicuous in the future. — These and a thousand other paradoxes (arising out of the supposition that Christianity is the fraudulent or fictitious product of such an age, country, and, above all, such men as the problem limits us to), must the infidel receive, and receive all at once ; and of him who *can*

* Was there ever in truth a man who could read the appeals of Paul to his converts, and doubt either that the letters were real, or that the man was in earnest? We scarcely venture to think it.

receive them we can but once more declare, that so far from having no "faith," he rather possesses the "faith" which removes "mountains!"—only it appears that his faith, like that of Rome or of Oxford, is a faith which excludes reason.

On the other hand, to him who accepts Christianity, none of these paradoxes present themselves. On the supposition of the truth of the miracles and the prophecies, he does not wonder at its origin or success: and as little does he wonder at all the literary and intellectual achievements of its early chroniclers, if their elevation of sentiment was from a divine source, and if the artlessness, harmony, and reality of their narratives was the simple effect of the consistency of truth, and of transcription from the life.

Now, on the other hand, what are the chief objections which reconcile the infidel to his enormous burden of paradoxes, and which appear to the Christian far less invincible than the paradoxes themselves? They are, especially with all modern infidelity, chiefly founded on the *à priori* improbability of the doctrines revealed, and of the miracles which sustain them. Now, here we come to the very distinction on which we have already insisted, and which is so much insisted on by Butler. The evidence which *sustains* Christianity is all such as man is competent to consider; and is precisely of the same nature as that which enters into his every-day calculations of probability; while the objections spring entirely from our ignorance and presumption. They suppose that we know more of the modes of the divine administration—of what God may have permitted, of what is possible and impossible, of the ultimate development of an imperfectly developed system, and of its relations to the entire universe,—than we do or can know.*

* The possible implication of Christianity with distant regions

Of these objections the most widely felt and the most specious, especially in our day, is the assumption that miracles are an *impossibility**; and yet we will venture to say that there is none more truly unphilosophical. That miracles are *improbable*, viewed in relation to the experience of the individual or of the mass of men, is granted; for if they were not, they would, as Paley says, be no miracles; an every-day miracle is none. But that they are either impossible, or so improbable that, if they *were* wrought, no evidence could establish them, is another matter. The first allegation involves a curious limitation of omnipotence; and the second affirms in *effect*, that, if God were to work a miracle, it would still be our *duty* to disbelieve him!

We repeat our firm conviction that this *a priori* presumption against miracles is but a vulgar illusion of one of Bacon's *idola tribus*. So far from being disposed to admit the principle that a 'miracle is an impossibility,' we shall venture on what may seem to some a paradox, but which we are convinced is a truth, — that the time will come, and is coming, when even those who shall object to the *evidence* which sustains the Christian miracles will acknowledge that philosophy *requires* them to admit that men have no ground whatever to dogmatise on the antecedent impossibility of miracles in general; and that not merely because, if theists at all, they will see the absurdity of

of the universe, and the dim hints which Scripture seems to throw out as to such implication, are beautifully treated in the 4th, 5th, and 6th of Chalmers's "Astronomical Discourses;" and we need not tell the reader of Butler how much he insists upon similar considerations.

* It is, as we shall see, the avowed axiom of Strauss; he even acknowledges that, if it be not true, he would not think it worth while to discredit the history of the Evangelists; that is, the history *must* be discredited, because he has resolved that a miracle is an impossibility!

this assertion, while they admit that the present order of things had *a beginning* ; and, if Christians at all, the equal absurdity of the assertion, while they admit that it will have *an end* ;—not only because the geologist will have familiarised the world with the idea of successive interventions, and, in fact, distinct creative acts, having all the nature of miracles ;—not only, we say, for these special reasons, but for a more general one. The true philosopher will see that, with his limited experience and that of all his contemporaries, he has no right to dogmatise about all that may have been permitted, or will be permitted, in the Divine administration of the universe. He will see that those who with one voice denied, about half a century ago, the existence of *aërolites*, and summarily dismissed all the alleged facts as a silly fable, because it contradicted *their* experience,—that those who refused to admit the Copernican theory, because, as they said, it manifestly contradicted *their* experience,—that the schoolboy who refuses to admit the first law of motion, because, as he says, it gives the lie to all *his* experience,—that the Oriental prince (whose scepticism Hume vainly attempts, on his principle, to meet) who denied the possibility of ice, because it contradicted *his* experience, — and, in the same manner, that the men who, with Dr. Strauss, lay down the dictum that a miracle is *impossible*, and a *contradiction*, because it contradicts *their* experience,—have all been alike contravening the first principles of the modest philosophy of Bacon, and have fallen into one of the most ordinary illusions against which he has warned us ; namely, that that cannot be true which seems in contradiction to our *own* experience. We confidently predict that the day will come, when the favourite argument of many a so-called philosopher in this matter will be felt to be the philosophy of the vulgar only ; and that

though many may, even then, deny that the testimony which supports the Scripture miracles is equal to the task, they will all alike abandon the axiom which supersedes the necessity even of examining such evidence, by asserting that no evidence can establish them.

While on this subject, we may notice a certain fantastical tone of depreciation of miracles as an evidence of Christianity, which is occasionally adopted even by some who do not deny the possibility or probability, or even the fact, of their occurrence. They affirm them to be of little moment, and represent them — with an exquisite affectation of metaphysical propriety — as totally incapable of convincing men of any *moral truth*; upon the ground that there is no natural relation between any displays of *physical power* and any such truth. Now, without denying that the nature of the doctrine is *a criterion**, and must be taken into account in judging of the reality of any alleged

* The alleged reasoning in a circle, from the doctrine to the miracle, and from the miracle to the doctrine, is a favourite retort of infidelity. It is, in fact, no more a vicious circle than is involved in the great argument for theism; that is, none at all. In the *latter* case, the works of creation prove power and wisdom, and their immensely prevailing characteristics also infer goodness. That immense preponderance of proof leads us to extend the inference to the residuum of phenomena which, if they existed *alone*, might imply a malevolent origin, or furnish, owing to our ignorance, no decisive indications at all. It is the same with miracles; their prevailing, — in the case of the New Testament, we may well say, their uniform — characteristics, will show clearly enough whether they originated with a malignant or a benevolent source; and the same may be said of the obvious character of that *portion* of the doctrines the nature and bearing of which we can appreciate. Having been thus proved (if really wrought) to come from heaven and not from hell, miracles will, in their turn, legitimately authenticate that portion of the doctrines of which (as in the case of the natural phenomena above mentioned) we are incompetent, from our ignorance, to judge, or which, as in those same phenomena, might, if taken alone, seem to afford opposite indications.

miracle, we have just two things to reply to this: first, that (as Paley says in relation to the question whether *any* accumulation of testimony can establish a miraculous fact) we are content "to try the theorem upon a simple case," and affirm that man is so constituted, that if he himself sees the blind restored to sight and the dead raised, under such circumstances as exclude all doubt of fraud on the part of others and all mistake on his own, he will uniformly associate authority with such displays of superhuman power; which, in fact, he has uniformly done, whenever he has, however falsely, attributed such power: and, secondly, that the notion in question is in direct contravention of the language and spirit of Christ himself, who *expressly* suspends his claims to men's belief and the authority of his doctrines on the fact of his miracles. "The *works* that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." "If ye believe not me, believe *my works*." "If I had not come among them, *and done the works that none other man did*, they had not had sin."

We have enumerated some of the paradoxes which infidelity is required to believe; and the old-fashioned, open, intelligible infidelity of the last century accepted them, and rejected Christianity accordingly. That was a self-consistent, simple, ingenuous thing, compared with those monstrous forms of credulous reason, incredulous faith, metaphysical mysticism, even Christian Pantheism, so many varieties of which have sprung out of the incubation of German rationalism and German philosophy upon the New Testament. The advocates of these systems, after adopting the most formidable of the above paradoxes of infidelity, and (notwithstanding the frequent boast of *originality*) depending mainly on the same objections, and defend-

ing them by the very same critical arguments*, delude themselves with the idea that they have purified and embalmed Christianity; not aware that they have first made a mummy of it. They are so greedy of paradox, that they, in fact, aspire to be Christians and infidels at the same time. Proclaiming the miracles of Christianity to be *illusions* of imagination or *mythical* legends, and the inspiration of its records no other or greater than that of Homer's "Iliad," or even "Æsop's Fables;"—rejecting the whole of that supernatural element with which the only records which can tell us any thing about the matter are full;——declaring its whole history so uncertain that the ratio of truth to error must be a vanishing fraction;—the advocates of these systems yet proceed to rant and rave—they are really the only words we know which can express our sense of their absurdity—in a most edifying vein about the divinity of Christianity, and to reveal to us its *true* glories. "Christ," says Strauss, "is not an individual, but an *idea*: that is to say, *humanity*. In the *human race* behold the God-made-man! behold the child of the visible virgin and the

* The main *objection*, both with the old and the new forms of infidelity, is that against the *miracles*; the main *arguments* with both, those which attempt to show their *antecedent impossibility*; and *criticism* directed against the credibility of the records which contain them. The principal *difference* is, that modern infidelity shrinks from the coarse imputation of fraud and imposture on the founders of Christianity; and prefers the theory of *illusion* or *myth* to that of deliberate fraud. But with this exception, which touches only the personal character of the founders of Christianity, the case remains the same. The same postulates and the same arguments are made to yield substantially the same conclusion. For all that is supernatural in Christianity and all credibility in its records, vanish equally on either assumption. Nor is even the modern *mode* of interpreting many of the miracles (as *illusions* or legends) unknown to the elder infidelity; only it more consistently felt that neither the one theory nor the other could be trusted to *alone*. *Velis et remis* was its motto.

invisible Father! — *that is*, of matter and of mind; behold the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Sinless One; behold him who dies, who is raised again, who mounts into the heavens! Believe in *this* Christ! In his death, his resurrection, man is justified before God!"* Well may Müller say, "And these insipidities of Pantheism we are to accept as the genuine interpretation of the evangelic history!" Some, indeed, do not hesitate to say that Strauss himself never believed these absurdities; and they say so in compassion to his understanding. They affirm that he said these things merely to cover his infidelity. They say that one so acute could not really believe such nonsense; or that, if he did, he must be thought acute no more. But if they thus save his understanding, it is at the expense of his honesty. It would prove, not only that Dr. Strauss is critical, and not seldom hypercritical, but also hypocritical. It must be confessed, however, that the flagitious manner in which, at the conclusion of his book, he has discussed the question — whether a man, in his own predicament, may not occupy the place of a Christian preacher and pastor to a congregation of ordinary Christians, taking care not to let them penetrate his disguise, — gives too much reason for the imputation. It is awkward, certainly, when a man will so act as to give the world only the alternative of inferring that he has either lost his wits or lost his integrity.†

But whether it be the Rationalism of Paulus, or the Rationalism of Strauss — whether that which declares

* Such is Quinet's brief statement of Strauss' mystico-mythical Christianity, founded on the Hegelian philosophy. For a fuller, we dare not say a more intelligible, account of it in Strauss' own words, and the metaphysical mysteries on which it depends, the reader may consult Dr. Beard's translation; — pp. 44, 45. of his Essay entitled "Strauss, Hegel, and their Opinions."

† See Appendix, No. I.

all that is supernatural in Christianity (forming the bulk of its history) to be illusion, or that which declares it myth, — the conclusions can be made out only by a system of interpretation which can be compared to nothing but the wildest dreams and allegorical systems of some of the early Fathers*; while the results themselves are either those elementary principles of ethics for which there was no need to invoke a revelation at all, or some mystico-metaphysical philosophy, expressed in language as unintelligible as the veriest gibberish of the Alexandrian Platonists. In fact, by such exegesis and by such philosophy, any thing may be made out of any thing; and the most fantastical data be compelled to yield equally fantastical conclusions.

But the first and most natural question to ask, is obviously this: how any mortal can pretend to extract *any thing* certain, much more *divine*, from records, the great bulk of which he has reduced to pure frauds, illusions, or legends, — and the great

* Of the mode of accounting for the supernatural occurrences in the Scriptures by the illusion produced by mistaken natural phenomena, (perhaps the most stupidly jejune of all the theories ever projected by man), Quinet eloquently says, "The pen which wrote the Provincial Letters would be necessary to lay bare the strange consequences of this theology. According to its conclusion, the tree of good and evil was nothing but a venomous plant, probably a manchineal tree, under which our first parents fell asleep. The shining face of Moses on the heights of Mount Sinai was the natural result of electricity; the vision of Zachariah was effected by the smoke of the chandeliers in the temple; the Magian kings, with their offerings of myrrh, of gold, and of incense, were three wandering merchants, who brought some glittering tinsel to the Child of Bethlehem; the star which went before them a servant bearing a flambeau; the angels in the scene of the temptation, a caravan traversing the desert, laden with provisions; the two angels in the tomb, clothed in white linen, an illusion caused by a linen garment; the Transfiguration, a storm." Who would not sooner be an old-fashioned infidel than such a doting and maundering rationalist?

bulk of the remainder to an absolute uncertainty of how little is true and how much false? * Surely it would need nothing less than a new revelation to reveal this sweeping restriction of the old; and we should even then be left in an ecstasy of astonishment — first, that the whole significance of it should have been veiled in frauds, illusions, or fictions; secondly, that its true meaning should have been hidden from the world for eighteen hundred years after its divine promulgation; thirdly, that it should be *revealed* at last, either in results which needed no revelation to reveal them, or in the Egyptian darkness of the allegorico-metaphysico-mystico-logico-transcendental “*formulae*” of the most obscure and contentious philosophy ever devised by man; and lastly, that all this superfluous trouble is to give us, after all, only the mysteries of a most enigmatical philosophy: For of Hegel, in particular, we think it may with truth be said, that the reader is seldom fortunate enough to *know* that he *knows* his meaning, or even to know that Hegel knew his own.

Whether, then, we regard the original compilers of the evangelic records as inventing all that Paulus or Strauss rejects, or sincerely believing their own delusions; or hold that their statements have been artfully corrupted or unconsciously disguised, till Christ and his Apostles are as effectually transformed and travestied as such dreamers are pleased to imagine, with what consistency can we believe any thing certain amidst so many acknowledged fictions inseparably incorporated with it? If A has told B truth once and

* Daub naïvely enough declares that “if you except all that relates to angels, demons, and miracles, there is scarcely *any* mythology in the Gospel.” An exception which reminds one of the Irish prelate who, on reading “Gulliver’s Travels,” remarked that there were *some* things in that book which he *could not think true*.

falsehood fifty times, (wittingly or unwittingly,) what can induce B to believe that he has any reason to believe A in that only time in which he *does* believe him, unless he knows the same truth by evidence quite independent of A, and for which he is not indebted to him at all? Should we not, then, at once acknowledge the futility of attempting to educe any certain historic fact, however meagre, or any doctrine, whether intelligible or obscure, from documents nine-tenths of which are to be rejected as a tissue of absurd fictions? Or why should we not fairly confess that, for aught we can tell, the *whole* is a fiction? For certainly, as to the amount of historic fact which these men affect to leave, it is obviously a matter of the most trivial importance whether we regard the whole Bible as absolute fiction or not. Whether an obscure Galilæan teacher, who taught a moral system which may have been as good (we can never *know* from such corrupt documents that it *was* as good) as that of Confucius, or Zoroaster, ever lived or not; and whether we are to add another name to those who have enunciated the elementary truths of ethics, is really of very little moment. Upon their principles we can clearly *know* nothing about him, except that he is the centre of a vast mass of fictions, the invisible nucleus of a huge conglomerate of myths. A thousand times more, therefore, do we respect those, as both more honest and more logical, who, on similar grounds, openly reject Christianity altogether; and who regard the New Testament, and speak of it, exactly as they would of Homer's "Iliad," or Virgil's "Æneid." Such men, consistently enough, trouble themselves not at all in ascertaining what residuum of truth, historical or ethical, may remain in a book which certainly gives ten falsehoods for one truth, and welds both together in indistinguishable con-

fusion. The German infidels, on the other hand, with infinite labour, and amidst infinite uncertainties, extract either truth "as old as the creation," and as universal as human reason,—or truth which, after being hidden from the world for eighteen hundred years in mythical obscurity, is unhappily lost again the moment it is discovered, in the infinitely deeper darkness of the philosophy of Hegel and Strauss; who in vain endeavour to gasp out, in articulate language, the still latent mystery of the Gospel! Hegel, in his last hours, is *said* to have said,—and if he did not say, he *ought* to have said,—“Alas! there is but one man in all Germany who understands my doctrine,—and *he* does not understand it!” And yet, by his account, Hegelianism and Christianity, “in their highest results,” [language, as usual, felicitously obscure,] “are one.” Both, therefore, are, alas! now for ever lost.

That great problem—to account for the origin and establishment of Christianity in the world, with a denial at the same time of its miraculous pretensions—a problem, the fair solution of which is obviously incumbent on infidelity—has necessitated the most gratuitous and even contradictory hypotheses, and may safely be said still to present as hard a knot as ever. The favourite hypothesis, recently, has been that of Strauss—frequently re-modified and re-adjusted indeed by himself—that Christianity is a *myth*, or collection of myths; that is, a conglomerate (as geologists would say) of a very slender portion of facts and truth, with an enormous accretion of undesigned fiction, fable, and superstitions; gradually framed and insensibly received, like the mythologies of Greece and Rome, or the ancient systems of Hindoo theology. It is true, indeed, that the particular *critical* arguments, the alleged historic discre-

pancies and so forth, on which this author founds his conclusion, are, for the most part, not original; most of them having been insisted on before, both in Germany and more especially in our own country, during the Deistical controversies of the preceding century. His idea of myths, however, may be supposed original; and he is very welcome to it. For of all the attempted solutions of the great problem, this will be hereafter regarded as, perhaps, the most untenable. Gibbon, in solving the same problem, and starting in fact from the same axioms, — for he too endeavoured to account for the intractable phenomenon from natural causes alone, — assigned, as one cause, the *reputation* of working miracles, the reality of which he denied; but he was far too cautious to decide whether the original founders of Christianity had pretended to work miracles, and had been enabled to cheat the world into the belief of them, or whether the world had been pleased universally to cheat itself into that belief. He was far too wise to tie himself to the proof that in the most enlightened period of the world's history — amidst the strongest contrarieties of national and religious feeling — amidst the bitterest bigotry of millions in behalf of what was old, and the bitterest contempt of millions for all that was new — amidst the opposing forces of ignorance and prejudice on the one hand and philosophy and scepticism on the other — amidst all the persecutions which attested and proved those hostile feelings on the part of the bulk of mankind — and above all, in the short space of thirty or forty years (which is all that Dr. Strauss allows himself), — Christianity *could* be thus deposited, like the mythologies of Greece or Rome! These, Gibbon well knew, were very gradual and silent formations; originating in the midst of a remote antiquity and an unhistoric age, during the very infancy and barbarism

of the races which adopted them, and confined, be it remembered, to those races *alone*; he knew that they display, instead of the exquisite and symmetrical beauty of Christianity, those manifest signs of gradual accretion which were fairly to be expected; in the varieties of the deposited or irrupted substances—in the diffracted appearance of various parts—in the very weather stains, so to speak, which mark the whole mass.

That the prodigious aggregate of miracles which the New Testament asserts, would, if fabulous, pass unchallenged, elude all detection, and baffle all scepticism,—collect in the course of a few years energetic and zealous assertors of their reality, in the heart of every civilised and almost every barbarous community, and, in the course of three centuries, change the face of the world, and destroy every other *myth* which fairly came in contact with it,—who but Strauss can believe? Was there no Dr. Strauss in those days? None to question and detect, as the process went on, the utter baselessness of these legends? Was all the world doting—was even the *persecuting* world asleep? Were all mankind resolved on befooling themselves? Are men wont thus quietly to admit miraculous pretensions, whether they be prejudiced votaries of another system or sceptics as to all? No: whether we consider the age, the country, the men assigned for the origin of these *myths*, we see the futility of the theory. It does not account even for their origination, much less for their success. We see that if any mythology could in such an age have germinated at all, it must have been one very different from Christianity; whether we consider the sort of Messiah the Jews expected, or the hatred of *all* Jewish Messiahs, which the Gentiles could not but have felt. The Christ offered them, so far from being welcome, was

to the one a "stumbling block" and to the other "foolishness."

Let us suppose a parallel *myth*—if so we may abuse the name. Let us suppose the son of some Canadian carpenter aspiring to be a moral teacher, but neither working nor *pretending* to work miracles; as much hated by his countrymen as Jesus Christ was hated by his, and both he and his countrymen as much hated by all the civilised world beside, as were Jesus Christ and the Jews: let us further suppose him forbidding his followers the use of all force in propagating his doctrines, and then let us calculate the probability of an unnoticed and accidental *deposit*, in thirty short years, of a prodigious accumulation, about these simple facts, of supernatural but universally accredited fables; these legends escaping detection or suspicion as they accumulated, and suddenly laying hold in a very little time of myriads of votaries in all parts of both worlds, and in three centuries uprooting and destroying Christianity and all opposing systems! How long will it be before the Swedenborgian, or the Mormonite, or any such pretenders, will have similar success? Have there not been a thousand such, and has any one of them had the slightest chance against *systems in possession*,—against the strongly rooted prejudices of ignorance and the Argus-eyed investigations of scepticism? But these prejudices of ignorance and this vigilance of scepticism were both opposed to the pretensions of Christianity; nor can any one example of at all similar and sudden success be alleged, except in the case of Mahomet; and to that the answer is brief. The history of Mahomet is the history of a conqueror—and his logic was the logic of the sword.

In spite of the theory of Strauss, therefore, not less than that of Gibbon, the old and ever recurring diffi-

culty of giving a rational account of the origin and establishment of Christianity still presents itself for solution to the infidel, as it always has done, and, we venture to say, always will do. It is an insoluble phenomenon, except by the admission of the facts of the New Testament. "The miracles," says Butler, "are a satisfactory account of the events, of which *no other satisfactory* account can be given ; nor any account at all, but what is imaginary merely and invented."

In the meantime, the different theories of unbelief mutually refute one another ; and we may plead the authority of one against the authority of another. Those who believe Strauss believe both the theory of imposture and the theory of illusion improbable ; and those who believe in the theory of imposture believe the theory of myths improbable. And both parties, we are glad to think, are quite right in the judgment they form of one another.

But what must strike every one who reflects as the most surprising thing in Dr. Strauss, is, that with the postulatam with which he sets out, and which he modestly takes for granted as too evident to need proof, he should have thought it worth while to write two bulky volumes of minute criticism on the subject. A miracle he declares to be an absurdity, a contradiction, an impossibility. If *we* believed this, we should deem a very concise enthymeme (after having *proved* that postulatam though) all that was necessary to construct on the subject. A miracle *cannot* be true ; *ergo*, Christianity, which in the only records by which we know anything about it, avows its absolute dependence upon miracles, *must* be false.*

It is a modification of one or other of these monstrous forms of unbelieving belief and Christian infidelity,

* For some further remarks on Dr. Strauss' work, see Appendix No. I.

that Mr. Foxton, late of Oxford, has adopted in his "Popular Christianity;" as perhaps also Mr. Froude in his "Nemesis." It is not very easy, indeed, to say what Mr. Foxton positively believes; having, in common with his German prototypes, a greater facility of telling us what he does *not* believe, and of wrapping up what he does believe, in a most impregnable mysticism. He certainly rejects, however, all that which, when rejected a century ago, left, in the estimate of every one, an infidel *in puris naturalibus*. Like his German acquaintances he accepts the infidel paradoxes—only, like them, he will still be a Christian. He believes, with Strauss, that a miracle is an impossibility and contradiction—"incredible *per se*." As to the inspiration of Christ—he regards it as, in its nature, the same as that of Zoroaster, Confucius, Mahomet, Plato, Luther, and Wickliffe—a curious assortment of "heroic souls."* With a happy art of confusing the "gifts of genius," no matter whether displayed in intellectual or moral power, and of forgetting that other men are not likely to overlook the difference, he declares "the wisdom of Solomon and the poetry of Isaiah the fruit of the *same* inspiration which is *popularly* attributed to Milton or Shakspeare, or even to the homely wisdom of Benjamin Franklin"†; in the same pleasant confusion of mind, he thinks that the "pens of Plato, of Paul and of Dante, the pencils of Raphael and of Claude, the chisels of Canova and of Chantrey, no less than the voices of Knox, of Wickliffe, and of Luther, are ministering instruments, in different degrees, of the same spirit."‡ "We find," he says, "both in the writers and the records of Scripture, every evidence of human infirmity that can possibly be conceived; and yet we are to believe that God himself specially inspired them with false philosophy,

* Pp. 62, 63.

† P. 72.

‡ P. 77.

vicious logic, and bad grammar!"* He denies the originality both of the Christian ethics (which he says are a gross plagiarism from Plato) as also in great part of the system of Christian doctrine.† Nevertheless, it

* P. 74.

† (Pp. 51—60.) We are hardly likely to yield to Mr. Foxton in our love of Plato, for whom we have expressed, and that very recently (April, 1848,) no stinted admiration: and what we have there affirmed we are by no means disposed to retract,—that no ancient author has approached, in the expression of ethical truth, so near to the maxims, and sometimes the very expressions, of the Gospel. Nevertheless, we as strongly affirm, that he who contrasts (whatever the occasional sublimity of expression) the faltering and often sceptical tone of Plato on religious subjects with the uniformity and decision of the Evangelical system,—his dark notions in relation to God (candidly confessed) with the glorious recognition of Him in the Gospel as "our Father,"—his utterly absurd application of his general principles of morals, in his most Utopian of all Republics, with the broad, plain social ethics of Christianity,—the tone of mournful familiarity (whatever his personal immunity) in which he too often speaks of the saddest pollutions that ever degraded humanity, with the spotless purity of the Christian rule of life,—the hesitating, speculative tone of the Master of the Academy with the decision and majesty of Him who "spake with authority, and not as the Scribes," whether Greek or Jewish,—the metaphysical and abstract character of Plato's reasonings with the severely practical character of Christ's,—the feebleness of the motives supplied by the abstractions of the one, and the intensity of those supplied by the other,—the adaptation of the one to the intelligent only, and the adaptation of the other to universal humanity,—the very *manner* of Plato, his gorgeous style, at least in those elevated portions of his works in which he reaches the moral sublime, with the still more impressive simplicity of the Great Teacher,—must surely see in the contrast every indication, to say nothing of the utter gratuitousness (historically) of the contrary hypothesis, that the sublime ethics of the Gospel, whether we regard substance, or manner, or tone, or style, are no plagiarism from Plato. As for the man who can hold such a notion, he must certainly be very ignorant either of Plato or of Christ. As the best apology for Mr. Foxton's offensive folly, perhaps it may be charitably hoped that he is nearly ignorant of both. From his exclusive dependence on the antiquated production of the indiscriminating and enthusiastic Dacier, one might conjecture that Mr. Foxton's Platonic studies are principally there; while Tindal's "Christianity as old as the creation" might be the source of his Theology. — Absurd is the attempt to identify the metaphysical dreams with the doctrinal system of the Gospel, though it is

would be quite a mistake, it seems, to suppose that Mr. Foxton is no Christian! He is, on the contrary, among the very few who can tell us what Christianity really is, and who can separate the falsehoods and the myths which have so long disguised it. He even talks most spiritually and with an edifying *onction*. He tells us “‘God was,’ indeed, ‘in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.’ And *but little* deduction need be made from the rapturous language of Paul, who tells us that ‘in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*’*; I *concede* to Christ” (generous admission!) “the highest inspiration *hitherto* granted to the prophets of God”†,—Mahomet, it appears, and Zoroaster and Confucius, having *also* statues in his truly Catholic Pantheon. “The position of Christ,” he tells us in another place, is “simply that of the foremost man in all the world,” though he “soars far above ‘all principalities and powers’—above all philosophies *hitherto* known—above all creeds *hitherto* propagated in his name;”—the true Christian doctrine, after having been hid from ages and generations, being reserved to be disclosed, we presume, by Mr. Foxton. His spiritualism, as usual with the whole school of our new Christian infidels, is, of course, exquisitely refined, — but, unhappily, very vague. He is full of talk about “a deep insight,” — a “faith not in dead histories, but in living realities — a revelation to our *innermost* nature.” “The true seer,” he says, “looking deep into causes, carries in his heart the simple wisdom of God. The secret harmonies of Nature

quite true, that long subsequent to Christ the Platonising Christians tried to accommodate the speculations of the sage they loved to the doctrines of a still greater master. It may be said, perhaps, that a Christian is no competent judge of the superiority of the Ethics of Christ to those of Plato. He may content himself with saying that Plato never extorted from his *friends* stronger eulogies than Christ has often extorted from his *enemies*.

vibrate on his ear, and her fair proportions reveal themselves to his eye. He has a deep faith in the truth of God.”* “The inspired man is one whose outward life derives all its radiance from the light within him. He walks through stony places by the light of his own soul, and stumbles not. No human motive is present to such a mind in its highest exultation — no love of praise — no desire of fame — no affection, no passion mingles with the divine afflatus, which passes over without ruffling the soul : ”† And a great many fine phrases of the same kind, equally innocent of all meaning.

It is amazing and amusing to see with what ease Mr. Foxton decides points which have filled folios of controversy. “In the teaching of Christ himself, there is not the *slightest allusion* to the modern evangelical notion of an atonement.” “The diversities of ‘gifts’ to which Paul alludes, Cor. i. 12., are nothing more than those different ‘gifts’ which, in common parlance, we attribute to the various tempers and talents of men.”‡ “It is, however, after all, absurd to suppose that the miracles of the Scriptures are subjects of actual belief, either to the vulgar or the learned.”§ What an easy time of it must such a controvertist have !

He thinks it possible, too, that Christ, though nothing more than an ordinary man, may really have “thought himself Divine,” without being liable to the charge of a visionary self-idolatry or of blasphemy, — as hitherto supposed by every body, Trinitarian or Unitarian, except Mr. Foxton. He accounts for it by the “wild sublimity of human emotion, when the rapt spirit first feels the throbbings of the divine afflatus,” &c. &c. A singular afflatus which teaches a man to usurp the name and prerogatives of Deity, and a strange “inspiration” which inspires him with so profound an

* P. 146. † P. 44. ‡ P. 67. § P. 104.

ignorance of his own nature ! *This* interpretation, we believe, is peculiarly Mr. Foxton's own.

The way in which he disposes of the miracles, is essentially that of an indiscriminating, unphilosophic mind. There have been, he tells us in effect, so many false miracles, superstitious stories of witches, conjurors, ghosts, hobgoblins, of cures by royal touch, and the like,—and *therefore* the Scripture miracles are false ! Why, who denies that there have been plenty of false miracles ?—And there have been as many false religions. Is there, therefore, none true ? The proper business in every such case is to examine fairly the evidence, and not to generalise after this absurd fashion. Otherwise we shall never believe any thing ; for there is hardly one truth that has not its half score of audacious counterfeits.

Still our author is amusingly perplexed, like all the rest of the infidel world, *how* to get rid of the miracles—whether on the principle of fraud, or fiction, or illusion. He thinks there would be “a great accession to the ranks of reason and common sense by disproving the *reality* of the miracles, without damaging the veracity or honesty of the simple, earnest, and enthusiastic writers by whom they are recorded ;” and complains of the coarse and indiscriminating criticism of most of the French and English Deists, who explain the miracles “on the supposition of the grossest fraud acting on the grossest credulity.” But he soon finds that the materials for such a compromise are utterly intractable. He thinks that the German Rationalists have depended too much on some “single hypothesis, which often proves to be *insufficient* to meet the great variety of conditions and circumstances with which the miracles have been handed down to us.” Very true ; but what remedy ? “We find one German writer endeavouring to explain away the miracles on the mystical (mythical) theory ; and

another riding into the arena of controversy on the miserable hobby-horse of 'clairvoyance' or 'mesmerism ;' each of these, and a host of others of the same class, rejecting whatever light is thrown on the question by all the theories together." Mr. Foxton therefore proposes, with great and gratuitous liberality, to heap all these theories together, and to take them as they are wanted ; not withholding any of the wonders of modern science—even, as would seem, the possible knowledge of "chloroform"*—from the propagators of Christianity !

But, alas ! the phenomena are still intractable. The stubborn "Book," in its very structure, baffles all such efforts to explain it away ; it is willing to be rejected, if it so pleases men, but it guards itself from being thus made a fool of. For who can fail to see that neither can all or any considerable part of the multifarious miracles of the New Testament be explained by any such gratuitous extension of ingenious fancies ; and that if they *could* be so explained, it would be still impossible to exculpate the men who *need* such explanations from the charge of perpetrating the grossest frauds ! Yet our logical ostrich, who can digest all these stones, presumptuously declares a miracle an *impossibility*, and the very notion of it a *contradiction*.†

There are no doubt some minds amongst us, whose power we admit, and whose perversion of power we

* Pp. 86, 87.

† Mr. Foxton denies that men, in Paley's "single case, in which he tries the general theorem," *would* believe the miracle ; but he finds it convenient to leave out the most significant circumstances on which Paley makes the validity of the testimony to depend, instead of stating them fairly in Paley's own words. Yet that the sceptics (if such there could be) must be the merest fraction of the species, Mr. Foxton himself immediately proceeds to prove, by showing (what is undeniably the case) that almost all mankind readily receive miraculous occurrences on far lower evidence than Paley's common sense would require them to demand. Surely he must be related to the Irishman who placed his ladder against the bough he was cutting off.

lament, who have bewildered themselves by *really* deep meditation on inexplicable mysteries ; who demand certainty where certainty is not given to man, or demand for truths which are established by sufficient evidence, *other* evidence than those truths will admit. We can even painfully sympathise in that ordeal of doubt to which such minds are peculiarly exposed — with their Titanic struggles against the still mightier power of Him who has said to the turbulent intellect of man, as well as to the stormy ocean, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further,—and here shall thy *proud* waves be staid.’ We cannot wish better to any such agitated mind than that it may listen to those potent and majestic words: “Peace — be still !” uttered by the voice of Him who so suddenly hushed the billows of the Galilæan lake.

But we are at the same time fully convinced that in our day there are thousands of youths who are falling into the same errors and perils from sheer vanity and affectation ; who admire most what they least understand, and adopt all the obscurities and paradoxes they stumble upon, as a cheap path to a reputation for profundity ; who awkwardly imitate the manner and retail the phrases of the writers they study ; and, as usual in such cases, exaggerate to caricature their least agreeable eccentricities. We should think that some of these more powerful minds must be by this time ashamed of that ragged regiment of most shallow thinkers, and obscure writers and talkers who at present infest our literature, and whose parrot-like repetition of their own stereotyped phraseology, mingled with some barbarous infusion of half-Anglicised German, threatens to form as odious a *cant* as ever polluted the stream of thought, or disfigured the purity of language. Happily it is not likely to be more than a passing fashion ; but still it is a very unpleasant fashion while it lasts. As in Johnson’s day, every young

writer imitated' as well as he could the ponderous diction and everlasting antitheses of the great dictator ; as in Byron's day, there were thousands to whom the world "was a blank " at twenty or thereabouts, and of whose "dark imaginings," as Macaulay says, the waste was prodigious ; so now there are hundreds of dilet-tanti pantheists, mystics and sceptics, to whom every thing is a "sham," an "unreality;" who tell us that the world stands in need of a great "prophet," a "seer," a "true priest," a "large soul," a "god-like soul,"* — who shall dive into "the depths of the human consciousness," and whose "utterances" shall rouse the human mind from the "cheats and frauds" which have hitherto everywhere practised on its simplicity. They tell us, in relation to philosophy, religion, and especially in relation to Christianity, that all that has been believed by mankind has been believed only on "empirical" grounds ; and that the old answers to difficulties will do no longer. They shake their sage heads at such men as Clarke, Paley, Butler, and declare that such arguments as theirs will not satisfy *them*. — We are glad to admit that all this vague pretension is now but rarely displayed in conjunction with the scurrilous spirit of that elder unbelief against which the long series of British apologists for Christianity arose between 1700 and 1750; but there is often in it an arrogance as real, though not in so offensive a form. Sometimes the spirit of unbelief even assumes an air of sentimental regret at its own inconvenient profundity. Many a worthy youth tells us he almost wishes he *could* believe. He admires, of all things, the "moral grandeur" — the "ethical beauty" of many

* See Mr. Foxton's last chapter, *passim*. From some expressions, one would almost imagine that our author himself aspired to be, if not the Messiah, at least the Elias, of this new dispensation. We fear, however, that this "vox clamantis" would reverse the Baptist's proclamation, and would cry, "The *straight* shall be made *crooked*, and the *plain* places *rough*."

parts of Christianity; he condescends to patronise Jesus Christ, though he believes that the great mass of words and actions, by which alone we know anything about him, are sheer fictions or legends; he believes — gratuitously enough in *this* instance, for he has no ground for it — that Jesus Christ was a very “great man,” worthy of comparison at least with Mahomet, Luther, Napoleon, and “other heroes;” he even admits the happiness of a simple, child-like faith, in the puerilities of Christianity — it produces such content of mind! But alas! *he* cannot believe — his intellect is not satisfied — he has revolved the matter too profoundly to be thus taken in; he must, he supposes (and our beardless philosopher sighs as he says it), bear the penalty of a too restless intellect, and a too speculative genius; he knows all the usual arguments which satisfied Pascal, Butler, Bacon, Leibnitz; but they will do no longer: more radical, more tremendous difficulties have suggested themselves, “from the depths of philosophy,” and far different answers are required now!*

* It may be feared that many young minds in our day are exposed to the danger of falling into one or other of the prevailing forms of unbelief, and especially into that of pantheistic mysticism, from rashly meditating in the cloudy regions of German philosophy, on difficulties which would seem beyond the limits of human reason, but which that philosophy too often promises to solve — with what success we may see from the rapid succession and impenetrable obscurities of its various systems. Alas! when will men learn that one of the highest achievements of philosophy is to know when it is vain to philosophise. When the obscure principles of these most uncouth philosophies, expressed, we verily believe, in the darkest language ever used by civilised man, are applied to the solution of the problems of theology and ethics, no wonder that the natural consequence, as well as just retribution, of such temerity is a plunge into tenfold night. Systems of German philosophy may perhaps be advantageously studied by those who are mature enough to study them; but that they have an incomparable power of *intoxicating* the intellect of the young aspirant to their mysteries, is, we think, undeniable. They

This is easily said, and we know *is* often said, and loudly. But the justice with which it is said is another

producing this effect just now in a multitude of our juveniles, who are beclouding themselves in the vain attempt to comprehend ill-translated fragments of ill-understood philosophies (executed in a sort of Anglicised-German, or Germanised-English, we know not which to call it, but certainly neither German nor English), from the perusal of which they carry away nothing but some very obscure terms, on which they themselves have superinduced a very vague meaning. These terms you in vain implore them to define ; or, if they define them, they define them in terms which as much need definition. Heartily do we wish that Socrates would re-appear amongst us, to exercise his accoucheur's art on these hapless Theætetuses and Menos of our day !

Many such youths might, no doubt, reply at first to the sarcastic querist (who might gently complain of a slight cloudiness in their speculations), that the truths they uttered were too profound for ordinary reasoners. We may easily imagine how Socrates would have dealt with such assumptions. His reply would be rather more severe than that of Mackintosh to Coleridge, in a somewhat similar case ; namely, that if a notion cannot be made clear to persons who have spent the better part of their days in revolving the difficulties of metaphysics and philosophy, and who are conscious that they are not destitute of patience for the effort requisite to understand them, it may suggest a doubt whether the fault be not in the medium of communication rather than elsewhere ; and, indeed, whether the philosopher be not aiming to communicate thoughts on subjects on which man can have no thoughts to communicate. Socrates would add, perhaps, that language was given us to express, not to conceal, our thoughts ; and that, if they cannot be communicated, invaluable as they doubtless are, we had better keep them to ourselves ; one thing it is clear he would do, — he would insist on precise definitions. But, in truth, it may be more than surmised that the obscurities of which all complain, except those (and in our day they are not a few) to whom obscurity is a recommendation, result from suffering the intellect to speculate in realms forbidden to its access ; of venturing into caverns of tremendous depth and darkness, with nothing better than our own rushlight. Surely we have reason to suspect as much when some learned professor, after muttering his logical incantations, and conjuring with his logical formulæ, surprises you by saying, that he has disposed of the great mysteries of existence and the universe, and solved to your entire satisfaction, in his own curt way, the problems of the ABSOLUTE and the INFINITE ! If the cardinal truths of philosophy and religion hitherto received are doomed to be imperilled by such speculations, one feels strongly inclined to pray with the old

matter ; for when we can get these cloudy objectors to put down, not their vague assertions of profound difficulties, uttered in the obscure language they love, but a precise statement of their objections, we find them either the very same with those which were quite as powerfully urged in the course of the deistical controversies of the last century (the case with far the greater part), or else such as are of similar character, and susceptible of similar answers. We say not that the answers were always satisfactory, nor are now inquiring whether any of them were so ; we merely maintain that the objections in question are not the novelties they affect to be. It is necessary to remember this, in order to obviate an advantage which the very vagueness of much modern opposition to Christianity would

Homerio hero, — “that if they must perish, it may be at least in daylight.”

We earnestly counsel the youthful reader to defer the study of German philosophy,—at least till he has matured and disciplined his mind, and familiarised himself with the best models of what used to be our boast — English clearness of thought and expression. He will then learn to ask rigidly for definitions, and not rest satisfied with half-meanings — or no meaning. To the naturally venturesome pertinacity of young metaphysicians, few would be disposed to be more indulgent than ourselves. From the time of Plato downwards — who tells us that no sooner do they “taste” of dialectics than they are ready to dispute with every body, “sparing neither father nor mother, scarcely even the lower animals,” if they had but a voice to reply, — they have always expected more from metaphysics than (except as a *discipline*) they will ever yield. He elsewhere, still more humorously, describes the same trait. He compares them to young dogs who are perpetually snapping at every thing about them : — Οἶμαι γὰρ σε οὐ λεληθέναι, ὅτι οἱ μαιρακίσκοι, ὅταν τὸ πρῶτον λόγων γεύωνται, ὥς παιδιᾷ αὐτοῖς καταχρῶνται, ἀεὶ εἰς ἀντιλογίαν χρώμενοι καὶ μιμούμενοι τοὺς ἐξελέγχοντας αὐτοὶ ἄλλους ἐλέγχουσι, χαίροντες ὥσπερ σκυλάκια τῷ ἔλκειν τε καὶ σπαράττειν τοὺς πλησίον ἀεὶ. But we hope we shall not see our metaphysical “puppies” amusing themselves — as many “old dogs” amongst our neighbours (who ought to have known better) have done, — by tearing into tatters the sacred leaves of that volume, which contains what is better than all their philosophy.

obtain, from the notion that some prodigious arguments have been discovered which the intellect of a Pascal or a Butler was not comprehensive enough to anticipate, and which no Clarke or Paley would have been logician enough to refute. We affirm, without hesitation, that when the new advocates of infidelity descend from their airy elevation, and state their objections in intelligible terms, they are found, for the most, what we have represented them. Inded, when we read many of the speculations of German infidelity, we seem to be re-perusing many of our own authors of the last century. It is as if our neighbours had imported our manufactures; and, after re-packing them, in new forms and with some additions of their own, had re-shipped and sent them back to us as new commodities. Hardly an instance of discrepancy is mentioned in the "Wolfenbüttel Fragments," which will not be found in the pages of our own deists a century ago; and, as already hinted, the vast majority of Dr. Strauss' elaborate strictures will be found in the same sources. In fact, though far from thinking it to our national credit, none but those who will dive a little deeper than most do into a happily forgotten portion of our literature, (which made noise enough in its day, and created very superfluous terrors for the fate of Christianity,) can have any idea of the extent to which the modern forms of unbelief in Germany—so far as founded on any *positive* grounds, whether of reason or of criticism,—are indebted to our English deists. Tholuck, however, and others of his countrymen, seem thoroughly aware of it.

The objections to the truth of Christianity are directed either against the evidence itself, or that which it substantiates. Against the latter, as Bishop Butler says, unless the objections be truly such as prove contradictions in it, they are "perfectly frivolous;" since we

cannot be competent judges either as to all which it may be worthy of the Supreme Mind to reveal*, or how far a portion of an imperfectly-developed system may harmonise with the whole; and, perhaps on many points, we never can be competent judges, unless we can cease to be finite. The objections to the *evidence itself* are, as the same great author observes, "well worthy of the fullest attention." The *a priori* objection to miracles has been already briefly touched. If that objection be valid, it is vain to argue further; but if not, the remaining objections must be powerful enough to neutralise the entire mass of the evidence, and, in fact, to amount to a proof of contradictions,—not on this or that minute point of historic detail,—but on such as shake the foundations of the whole edifice of evidence. It will not do to say, "Here is a minute discrepancy in the history of Matthew or Luke as compared with that of Mark or John;" for,

First, such discrepancies are often found, in other authors, to be apparent, and not real,—founded on our taking for granted that there is no circumstance unmentioned by two writers which, if known, would have been seen to harmonise their statements. This possible reconciliation is admitted readily enough in the case of many seeming discrepancies of *other* historians; but it is a benefit which men are slow to extend to the sacred narratives. There the objector is always apt to take it for granted that the discrepancy is real; though it may be easy to suppose a case (and a *possible* case is quite sufficient for the purpose) which would neutralise the objection. Of this perverseness (we can call it by no other name) the examples are perpetual in the critical tortures to which Strauss has subjected the

* For some further remarks on this subject, see Appendix, No. II.

sacred historians.* — It may be objected, perhaps, that the gratuitous supposition of some unmentioned fact — which, if mentioned, would harmonise the apparently counter-statements of two historians — cannot be ad-

* The reader may see some striking instances of his disposition gratuitously to take the *worse* sense, in Beard's "Voices of the Church." Tholuck truly observes, too, in his strictures on Strauss, "We know how frequently the loss of a few words in *one* ancient author would be sufficient to cast an inexplicable obscurity over another." The same writer well observes, that there never was an historian who, if treated on the principles of criticism which his countryman has applied to the Evangelists, might not be proved a mere mythographer. . . . "It is plain," says he, "that if absolute agreement among historians" — and, still more, absolute *apparent* agreement — "be necessary to assure us that we possess in their writings credible history, we must renounce all pretence to any such possession." The translations from Quinet, Coquerel, and Tholuck are all, in different ways, well worth reading. The last truly says, "Strauss came to the study of the Evangelical history with the foregone conclusion that 'miracles are impossible;' and where an investigator brings with him an absolute conviction of the guilt of the accused to the examination of his case, we know how even the most innocent may be implicated and condemned out of his own mouth." In fact, so strong and various are the proofs of truth and reality in the history of the New Testament, that none would ever have suspected the veracity of the writers, or tried to disprove it, except for the above foregone conclusion — "that miracles are impossible." We also recommend to the reader an ingenious *brochure* included in the "Voices of the Church, in reply to Strauss," constructed on the same principle with Whately's admirable "Historic Doubts;" namely, "The Fallacy of the Mythical Theory of Dr. Strauss, illustrated from the History of Martin Luther, and from actual Mohammedan Myths of the Life of Jesus." What a subject for the same play of ingenuity would be Dean Swift! The date and place of his birth disputed — whether he was an Englishman or an Irishman — his incomprehensible relations to Stella and Vanessa, utterly incomprehensible on any hypothesis — his alleged seduction of one, of both, of neither — his marriage with Stella affirmed, disputed, and still wholly unsettled — the numberless other incidents in his life full of contradiction and mystery — and, not least, the eccentricities and inconsistencies of his whole character and conduct! Why, with a thousandth part of Dr. Strauss' assumptions, it would be easy to reduce Swift to as fabulous a personage as his own Lemuel Gulliver. (For further remarks, see Appendix, No. I.)

mitted, and is, in fact, a surrender of the argument. But to say so, is only to betray an utter ignorance of what the argument is. If an objection be founded on the alleged *absolute* contradiction of two statements, it is quite sufficient to show any (not the real, but only a hypothetical and possible) medium of reconciling them; and the objection is, in all fairness, dissolved: and this would be felt by the honest logician, even if we did not know of any such instances in point of fact. We do know, however, of many. Nothing is more common than to find, in the narration of two perfectly honest historians, — referring to the same events from different points of view, or for a different purpose, — the omission of a fact which gives a seeming contrariety to their statements; a contrariety which the mention of the omitted fact by a third writer instantly clears up.* Very forgetful of this have the advocates of infidelity

* Any *apparent* discrepancy with either themselves or profane historians is usually sufficient to satisfy Dr. Strauss. He is ever ready to conclude that the discrepancy is *real*, and that the profane historians are right. In adducing some striking instances of the minute accuracy of Luke, only revealed by obscure collateral evidence (historic or numismatic) discovered since, Tholuck remarks, "What an outcry would have been made, had not the specious appearance of error been thus obviated." "Luke calls *Gallio* proconsul of Achaia: we should not have expected it, since, though Achaia was originally a senatorial province, Tiberius had changed it into an imperial one, and the title of its governor, therefore, was procurator; now a passage in Suetonius informs us, that Claudius had *restored* the province to the senate." The same Evangelist calls Sergius Paulus governor of Cyprus; yet we might have expected to find only a prætor, since Cyprus was an *imperial* province. In this case, again, says Tholuck, the correctness of the historian has been remarkably attested. Coins, and later still a passage in Dion Cassius, have been found, giving proof that Augustus restored the province to the senate; and, as if to vindicate the Evangelist, the Roman historian adds, "Thus proconsuls began to be sent into that island also." — *Trans. from Tholuck*, pp. 21, 22. In the same manner coins have been found proving he is correct in some other once disputed instances. Is it not fair to suppose that many apparent discrepancies of the same order may be eventually removed by similar evidence?

usually been : nay, (as if they would make up in the number of objections what they want in weight,) they have frequently availed themselves not only of apparent *contrariedades*, but of mere *incompleteness* in the statements of two different writers, on which to found a charge of contradiction. Thus, if one writer says that a certain person was present at a given time or place, when another says that he and two more were there ; or that one man was cured of blindness, when another says that two were cured, — such a thing is often alleged as a contradiction ; whereas, in truth, it presents not even a difficulty — unless one historian be bound to say not only all that another says, but just so much, and no more. Let such objections be what they will, unless they prove absolute contradictions in the narrative, they are as mere dust in the balance, compared with the stupendous mass and variety of that evidence which confirms the substantial truth of Christianity. And even if they establish *real* contradictions, they still amount, for reasons we are about to state, to no more than dust in the balance, unless they establish contradictions not in immaterial but in vital points. The objections must be such as, if proved, leave the whole fabric of evidence in ruins. For,

Secondly, we are fully disposed to concede to the objector that there are, in the books of Scripture, not only *apparent* but *real* discrepancies, — a point which many of the advocates of Christianity are, indeed, reluctant to admit, but which, we think, no candid advocate will feel to be the less true. Nevertheless, even such an advocate of the Scriptures may justly contend that the very reasons which necessitate this admission of discrepancies also reduce them to such a limit that they do not affect, in the slightest degree, substantial credibility of the sacred records ; and,

in our judgment, Christians have unwisely damaged their cause, and given a needless advantage to the infidel, by denying that any discrepancies exist, or by endeavouring to prove that they do not. The discrepancies to which we refer are just those which, in the course of the transmission of ancient books, divine or human, through many ages,—their constant transcription by different hands,—their translation into various languages,—may not only be expected to occur, but which *must* occur, unless there be a perpetual series of most minute and ludicrous miracles—certainly never promised, and as certainly never performed—to counteract all the effects of negligence and inadvertence, to guide the pen of every transcriber to infallible accuracy, and to prevent his ever deviating into any casual error! Such miraculous intervention, we need not say, has never been pleaded for by any apologist of Christianity; has certainly never been promised; and, if it had,—since we see, *as a matter of fact*, that the promise has never been fulfilled,—the whole of Christianity would fall to the ground. But then, from a large induction, we know that the limits within which discrepancies and errors from *such* causes will occur, must be very moderate; we know, from numberless examples of *other* writings, what the maximum is,—and that it leaves their substantial authenticity untouched and unimpeached. No one supposes the writings of Plato and Cicero, of Thucydides and Tacitus, of Bacon or Shakspeare, fundamentally vitiated by the like discrepancies, errors, and absurdities which time and inadvertence have occasioned.

The corruptions in the Scriptures, from these causes, are likely to be even less than in the case of any other writings; from their very structure,—the varied and reiterated forms in which all the great truths are

expressed; from the greater veneration they inspired; the greater care with which they would be transcribed; the greater number of copies which would be diffused through the world,—and which, though that very circumstance would multiply the number of variations, would also afford, in their collation, the means of reciprocal correction;—a correction which we have seen applied in our day, with admirable success, to so many ancient writers, under a system of canons which have now raised this species of criticism to the rank of an inductive science. This criticism, applied to the Scriptures, has, in many instances, restored the true reading, and dissolved the objections which might have been founded on the uncorrected variations; and, as time rolls on, may lead, by yet fresh discoveries and more comprehensive recensions, to a further clarifying of the stream of Divine truth, till “the river of the water of life” shall flow nearly in its original limpid purity. Within such limits as these, the most consistent advocate of Christianity not only *must* admit—not only may *safely* admit—the existence of discrepancies, but may do so even with advantage to his cause. He *must* admit them, since such variations must be the result of the manner in which the records have been transmitted, unless we suppose a supernatural intervention, neither promised by God, nor pleaded for by man: he may safely admit them, because—from a general induction from the history of all literature—we see that, where copies of writings have been sufficiently multiplied, and sufficient motives for care have existed in the transcription, the limits of error are very narrow, and leave the substantial identity untouched: and he may admit them with advantage; for the admission is a reply to many objections founded on the assumption that he must contend that there are *no* variations, when

he need only contend that there are none that can be material.

But it may be said, "May not we be permitted, while conceding the miraculous and other evidences of Christianity, and the general authority of the records which contain it, to go a step further, and to reject some things which seem palpably ill-reasoned, distasteful, inconsistent, or immoral?" "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." For ourselves, we honestly confess we cannot see the logical consistency of such a position; any more than the reasonableness, after having admitted the preponderant evidence for the great truth of Theism, of excepting some phenomena as apparently at variance with the Divine perfections; and thus virtually adopting a Manichæan hypothesis.* We must recollect that we know nothing of Christianity except from its records; and as these, once fairly ascertained to be authentic and genuine, are all, as regards their contents, supported precisely by the same miraculous and other external evidence which sustains any part of them; as they bear upon them precisely the same internal marks of artlessness, truth, and sincerity; and, historically and in other respects, are inextricably interwoven with one another; we see not on what principles we can safely reject portions as improbable, distasteful, not quadrating with the dictates of "reason," our "intuitional consciousness," and what not. This assumed liberty, however, is, as we apprehend, of the very essence of Rationalism; and it may be called the Manichæism of interpretation. So long as the canonicity of any of the records, or any portion of them, or their true interpretation, is in dispute, we may fairly

* For further remarks on this very interesting subject, suggested by a conversation with one of the most powerful as well as brilliant minds of this or of any age, see Appendix, No. III.

doubt; but that point once decided by honest criticism, to say we receive such and such portions, on account of the weight of the general evidence, and yet reject other portions, *though* sustained by the same evidence, because we think there is something unreasonable or revolting in their substance, is plainly to accept evidence only where it *pleases* us, and to reject it where it *pleases* us not. The only question fairly at issue must ever be, whether the general evidence for Christianity will overbear the difficulties which we cannot separate from the truths. If it will not, we must reject it wholly; and if it will, we must receive it wholly. There is plainly no tenable position between absolute infidelity and absolute belief. And this is proved by the infinitely various and Protean character of Rationalism, and the perfectly indeterminate, but always arbitrary, limits it imposes on itself. It exists in all forms and degrees, from a moderation which accepts nearly the entire system of Christianity, and which certainly rejects nothing that can be said to constitute its distinctive truth, to an audacity of unbelief, which, professing still vaguely to reverence Christianity as "something divine," sponges out nine-tenths of the whole; or, after reducing the mass of it to a *caput mortuum* of lies, fiction, and superstitions, retains only a few drops of fact and doctrine,—so few as certainly not to pay for the expenses of the critical distillation.*

* It may be as well to remark, that we have frequently observed a disposition to represent the very general abandonment of the theory of "verbal inspiration" as a concession to Rationalism; as if it necessarily followed, from admitting that inspiration is not verbal, that therefore an indeterminate portion of the substance or doctrine is purely human. It is plain, however, that this is no necessary consequence: an advocate of plenary inspiration may contend, that, though he does not believe that the very words of Scripture were dictated, yet that the thoughts were either so suggested (if the matter was such as could be known

Nor will the theory of what some call the "intuitional consciousness" avail us here. It is true, as they assert, that the constitution of human nature is such that, before its actual development, it has a capacity of developing to certain effects only, — just as the flower in the germ, as it expands to the sun, will have certain colours and a certain fragrance, and *no other*; — all which, indeed, though not very new or profound, is very important. But it is not so clear that it will give us any help on the present occasion. We have an original susceptibility of music, of beauty, of religion, it is said. Granted; but as the actual development of this susceptibility exhibits all the diversities between Handel's notions of harmony and those of an American Indian — between Raphael's notions of beauty and those of a Hottentot — between St. Paul's notions of a God and those of a New Zealander — it would appear that *the education* of this susceptibility is at least as important as the susceptibility itself, if not more so; for without the susceptibility itself, we should simply have *no* notion of music, beauty, or religion; and between such negation and that notion of all these which New Zealanders and Hottentots possess.

only by revelation), or so controlled (if the matter were such as was previously known) that (excluding errors introduced into the text since) the Scriptures as first composed were — what no book of man ever was, or can be, even in the plainest narrative of the simplest events — a perfectly accurate expression of truth. We enter not here, however, into the question whether such a view of inspiration is better or worse than another. The simple object has been to correct a fallacy which, judging from what we have recently read, has operated rather extensively. Inspiration may be verbal, or the contrary; but, whether one or the other, he who takes the affirmative or negative of that question may still *consistently* contend that it may be plenary. The question of the inspiration of the whole, or the inspiration of a part, is widely different from that as to the suggestion of the words or the suggestion of the thoughts. But these questions we leave to professed theologians. We merely enter our protest against a prevailing fallacy.

not a few of our species would probably prefer the former. It is in vain then to tell us to look into the "depths of our own nature" (as some vaguely say), and to judge thence what, in a professed revelation from heaven, is suitable to us, or worthy of our acceptance and rejection respectively. This criterion is, as we see by the utterly different judgments formed by different classes of Rationalists as to the *how much* they shall receive of the revelation they may generally admit, a very shifting one—a measure which has no linear unit; it is to employ, as mathematicians say, a variable as if it were a constant quantity; or, rather, it is to attempt to find the value of an unknown quantity by another equally unknown.

It may be contended, then, that the principle of Rationalism is logically untenable; and that for many reasons: not merely or principally on account of the absurdity it involves,—that God has expressly supplemented human reason by a revelation containing an indeterminate but large portion of falsities, errors, and absurdities, and which we are to commit to our little alembic, and distil as we may; not only on account of the paradox it imposes, that God has demanded our *faith*, for statements which are to be received only as they appear perfectly comprehensible by our *reason*; or, in other words, only for what it is impossible that we should doubt or deny; not merely because the principle inevitably leaves man to construct the so-called revelation entirely for himself; so that what one man receives as a genuine communication from heaven, another, from having a different development of "his intuitional consciousness," rejects as an absurdity too gross for human belief:—Not wholly, we say, nor even principally, for these reasons; but for the still stronger reason, that such a principle involves in its application an egregious trifling with that great com-

plex mass of evidence which, as we have said, applies to the *whole* of Christianity or to *none* of it. As if to baffle the efforts of man consistently to disengage these elements of our belief, the whole are inextricably blended together. The supernatural element, especially, is so diffused, through all the records, that it is more and more felt, at every step, to be impossible to obliterate it, without obliterating the entire system in which it circulates. The stain, if stain it be, is far too deep for any scouring fluids of Rationalism to wash it out, without destroying the whole texture of our creed; and, in our judgment, the only consistent Rationalism is the Rationalism which rejects it all.

At whatever point the Rationalist may take his stand, we do not think it difficult to prove that his conduct is eminently irrational. If, for example, he be one of those moderate Rationalists who admit (as thousands do) the miraculous and other evidence of the supernatural origin of the Gospel, and *therefore* also admit such and such doctrines to be true,—what can he reply, if further asked what reason he can have for accepting these truths, and rejecting others which are supported by the very same evidence? How can he be sure that the truths he receives are established by evidence which, to all appearance, equally authenticates the falsehoods he rejects? Surely, as already said, this is to reject and accept evidence as he pleases. If, on the other hand, he says that he receives the miracles only to authenticate what he knows very well without them, and believes true on the information of reason alone, why trouble miracles and revelation at all? Is not this, according to the old proverb, to “take a hatchet to break an egg”?*

* If such a man says that he rejects certain doctrines, not on *rationalistic* grounds, but because he denies the canonical authority, or the interpretation of portions of the records in which they

Nor can we disguise from ourselves, indeed, that consistency in the application of the essential principle of Rationalism would compel us to go a few steps further ; for since, as Bishop Butler has shown, no greater difficulties (if so great) attach to the page of Revelation than to the volume of Nature itself (what for example can be greater than those which are involved in that dread enigma, "the origin of evil," compared with which all other enigmas are trifles,—that abyss into which so many of the difficulties of all theology, natural and revealed, at least disembody themselves?), we feel that the admission of the principle of Rationalism would ultimately drive us, not only to reject Christianity, but to reject Theism in all its forms, whether Monotheism, or Pantheism, and even positive or dogmatic Atheism itself. Nor could we stop, indeed, till we had arrived at that absolute pyrrhonism which consists, if such a thing be possible, —in the negation of all belief, —even to the belief that we do not believe!

But though the objections to the reception of Christianity are numerous, and some insoluble, the question always returns, whether they overbalance the mass of the evidence in its favour? Nor is it to be forgotten that they are susceptible of indefinite alleviation as time rolls on ; and with a few observations on this point we will close the present discussion.

A refinement of modern philosophy often leads our rationalist to speak depreciatingly, if not contemptuously, of what he calls a *stereotyped* revelation — reve-

are found, and is willing to abide by the issue of the evidence on those points — evidence with which the human mind is quite competent to deal, — we answer, that he is not the man with whom we are now arguing. The points in dispute will be ultimately determined by the honest use of history, criticism, and philology. But between such a man and one who rejects Christianity altogether, we can imagine no *consistent* position.

lation in a "*book*." It ties down, he is fond of saying, the spirit to the letter; and limits the "progress" and "development" of the human mind in its "free" pursuit of truth. The answer we should be disposed to make is, first, that if a book *does* contain truth, the sooner that truth is stereotyped the better; secondly, that if such book, like the book of Nature, or, as we deem, the book of Revelation, really contains truth, its study, so far from being incompatible with the spirit of free inquiry, will invite and repay continual efforts *more completely* to understand it. Though the great and fundamental truths contained in either volume will be obvious in proportion to their importance and necessity, there is no limit which can be prescribed to the *degree* of accuracy with which the truths they severally contain may be deciphered, stated, adjusted—or even to the period in which fragments of new truth shall continue to be elicited. It is true indeed that theology cannot be said to admit of unlimited progress, in the same sense as chemistry—which may, for aught we know, treble or quadruple its present accumulations, vast as they are, both in bulk and importance. But even in theology, as deduced from the Scripture, minute fragments of new truth, or more exact adjustments of old truth, may be perpetually expected.—Lastly, we shall reply, that the objection to a revelation's being confined to a "*book*" is singularly inapposite, considering that by the constitution of the world and of human nature, man, without *books*—without the power of recording, transmitting, and perpetuating thought, of rendering it permanent and diffusive,—ever is, ever has been, and ever *must* be little better than a savage; and therefore, if there was to be a revelation at all, it might fairly be expected that it would be communicated in this form; thus affording us one more ana-

logy, in addition to the many which Butler has stated, and which may in time be multiplied without end, between "Revealed Religion and the Constitution and Course of Nature."

And this leads us to notice a saying of that comprehensive genius, which we do not recollect having seen quoted in connexion with recent controversies, but which is well worthy of being borne in mind; as teaching us to beware of hastily assuming that objections to Revelation, whether suggested by the progress of science, or by the supposed incongruity of its own contents, are unanswerable. We are not, he says, rashly to suppose that we have arrived at the true meaning of the *whole* of that book. "It is not at all incredible that a book, which has been so long in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscerned. For all the same phenomena and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before." These words are worthy of Butler; and, as many illustrations of their truth have been supplied since his day, so many others may fairly be anticipated in the course of time. Several distinct species of argument for the truth of Christianity, from the very structure and contents of the books containing it, have been invented — of which Paley's "*Horæ Paulinæ*" is a memorable example. The diligent collation of the text, too, has removed many difficulties; the diligent study of the original languages, of ancient history, manners and customs, has cleared up many more; and by supplying proofs of accuracy, where error or falsehood had been charged, has supplied important additions to the evidence which substantiates the truth of Revelation. Against the alleged absurdity of the Laws of Moses, again, such

works as that of Michaelis have disclosed much of that *relative wisdom* which aims not at the abstractedly *best*, but the best which a given condition of humanity, a given period of the world's history, and a given purpose could dictate. In pondering such difficulties as still remain in those laws, we may remember the answer of Solon to the question, whether he had given the Athenians the *best* laws; he said, No: but that he had given them the best of which they were capable: or the judgment of the illustrious Montesquieu, who remarks, "When Divine Wisdom said to the Jews, 'I have given you precepts which are not good,' this signifies that they had only a *relative* goodness; and this is the sponge which wipes out all the difficulties which are to be found in the Laws of Moses." This is a truth which we are persuaded a profound philosophy will understand the better, the more deeply it is revolved; and only those legislative pedants will refuse weight to it, who would venturously propose to give New Zealanders and Hottentots, in the starkness of their savage ignorance, the complex forms of the British constitution.

In a similar manner have many of the old objections of our deistical writers ceased to be heard in our day, unless it be from the lips of the veriest sciolism; the objections, for instance, of that truly pedantic philosophy which once argued that ethical and religious truth are not given in the Scripture in a *system* such as a schoolman might have digested it into; as if the brief iteration and varied illustration of pregnant truth, intermingled with narrative, parable, and example, were not infinitely better adapted to the condition of the human intellect in general! For similar reasons, the old objection, that statements of Christian morality are given without the requisite limitations, and cannot be literally acted upon, has been long since

abandoned as an absurdity. It is granted that a hundred folios could not contain the hundredth part of all the limitations of human actions, and all the possible cases of a contentious casuistry; and it is *also* granted that human nature is not so inept as to be incapable of interpreting and limiting for itself such rules as "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Not less strikingly have many of the objections, suggested at different periods by the progress of science, been dissolved; and, amongst the rest, those alleged from the remote historic antiquity of certain nations; objections, on which infidels, like Volney and Voltaire, once so confidently relied. And it is worthy of remark, that some of the old objections of philosophers have disappeared by the aid of that very science—geology—which has led, as every new branch of science probably will, to new ones. Geology, indeed, in our judgment, has already done at least as much to remove difficulties as to occasion them; and it is not illogical, or perhaps unfair, to surmise that, if we will only have *patience*, its own difficulties, as those of so many other branches of science, will be eventually solved. One thing is clear,—that, if the Bible be true and geology be true, *that* cannot be geologically true which is scripturally false, or *vice versâ*; and we may therefore laugh at the polite compromise which is sometimes affected by learned professors of theology and geology respectively; who are apt, in extravagant complaisance to one another, to express themselves not simply to the effect that truth may be established by different species of evidence, but as if different species of evidence could establish *contrary* truths.—All that is demanded of either—all that is needed—is, that they refrain from a too hasty conclusion of absolute contradictions between their respective sciences, and retain a quiet remembrance of the imperfection of our present know-

ledge both of geology and, as Butler says, of the Bible. The recent interpretation of the commencement of Genesis—by which the first verse is simply supposed to affirm the original creation of all things, while the second immediately refers to the commencement of the human economy—was first suggested by geology, though suspected and indeed anticipated by some of the early Fathers. On this interpretation, those prodigious cycles which geology demands, are—not denied—but simply passed by, with a silence worthy of a *true* revelation, which does not pretend to gratify our curiosity as to the pre-adamitic condition of our globe any more than our curiosity as to the history of other worlds. But though, at first sight, this interpretation appeared to many, from old association, inadmissible, it is now felt by multitudes to be the more *reasonable* interpretation,—the second verse certainly more naturally suggesting previous revolutions in the history of the earth than its then instant creation : and though we frankly concede that we have not *yet* seen any account of the whole first chapter of Genesis which quadrates with the doctrines of geology, it does not become us hastily to conclude that there can be none. If a further adjustment of those doctrines, and a more diligent investigation of the Scripture, together, should hereafter *suggest* any *possible* harmony,—though not the *true* one, but one ever so gratuitously assumed,—it will be sufficient to neutralise the objection. This, it will be observed, is in accordance with what has been already shown,—that wherever an objection is founded on an apparent contradiction between two statements, it is sufficient to show any *possible* way in which the statements may be reconciled, whether the true one or not. The objection, in that case, to the supposition that the facts are gratuitously assumed, though often urged, is, in reality, nothing to the pur-

pose.* If ever it should be shown, for example, that supposing as many geological eras as the philosopher requires, to have passed in the chasm between the first verse, which asserts the original dependence of all things on the fiat of the Creator, and the second, which is supposed to commence the human era, any *imaginable* condition of our system—at the close, so to speak, of a given geological period—would harmonise with a fair interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, the objection will be neutralised.

We have little doubt, in our own minds, that the ultimately converging, though, it may be, transiently discrepant conclusions of the sciences of philology, ethnology, and geology (in all of which we may rest assured great discoveries are yet to be made) will tend to harmonise with the ultimate results of a more thorough study of the records of the race as contained in the book of Revelation. Let us be permitted to imagine one example of such possible harmony. We think that the philologist may engage to make out, on the *strictest principles of induction*, from the tenacity with which all communities cling to their language, and the slow *observed* rate of change by which they alter; by which Anglo-Saxon, for example, has been transformed into English†, Latin into Italian, and

* Some admirable remarks, in relation to the answers we are bound to give to objections to revealed religion, have been made by Leibnitz (in reply to Bayle) in the little tract prefixed to his *Theodicée*, entitled “De la Conformité de la Foi avec la Raison.” He there shows that the utmost that can fairly be asked is, to prove that the affirmed truths involve no necessary contradiction.

† It contains, let us recollect (after all causes of change, including a conquest, have been at work upon it), a vast majority of the Saxon words spoken in the time of Alfred—nearly a thousand years ago!—The resemblance between the language of Homer and the Romaic—between the oldest fragments of Latin and modern Italian, is still obvious on the most superficial inspection; yet the interval during which these languages have been changing within these limits embraces a very large portion of authentic

ancient Greek into modern (though these languages have been affected by every conceivable cause of variation and depravation); that it would require hundreds of thousands, nay millions, of years to account for the production, by known natural causes, of the vast multitude of totally distinct languages, and tens of thousands of dialects, which man now utters. On the other hand, the geologist is more and more persuaded of the comparatively recent origin of the human race. What, then, is to harmonise these conflicting statements? Will it not be curious, if it should turn out that nothing *can* possibly harmonise them but the statement of Genesis, that in order to prevent the natural tendency of the race to accumulate on one spot, and facilitate their dispersion and destined occupancy of the globe, a preternatural intervention expedited the operation of the causes which would gradually have given birth to distinct languages? Of the probability of this intervention, some profound philologists have, on scientific grounds alone, expressed their conviction. But in all such matters, what we plead for is only — *patience*; we wish not to dogmatise; all we ask is, a philosophic abstinence from dogmatism. In relation to many difficulties, what is now a reasonable exercise of faith may one day be rewarded by a knowledge which on those particular points may terminate it. In such ways, it is surely conceivable that a great part of the objections against Revelation may, in time, disappear; and, though other

history. What interval, then, would be required for the origination and formation of whole classes of languages between which the philologist is unable to detect any affinities — though he is persuaded they all came from a common stock? Nor are we to forget, that the further we recede, the longer will be the interval required for any given amount of change; for the fewer the languages, the fewer the elements and chances of new combinations.

objections may be the result of the progress of the older sciences or the origination of new,—still the solution of previous objections, together with the additions to the evidences of Christianity, external and internal, which the study of history and of the Scriptures may supply, and the brighter and brighter light cast by the progress of Christianity and the fulfilment of its prophecies, may inspire increasing confidence that the new objections are also destined to yield to similar solvents. Meanwhile, such new difficulties, together with those more awful and gigantic shadows, which we have no reason to believe will ever be chased from the sacred page,—mysteries which could not be explained from the necessary limitation of our faculties, and are, at all events, submitted to us as a salutary discipline of our humility,—will continue to form that exercise of faith which is perhaps nearly equal in every age—and necessary in all ages, if we would be made “little children,” qualified “to enter the kingdom of God.”

In conclusion; while many are proclaiming that Christianity is effete, and that, in the language of M. Proudhon (who complacently says it amidst the ignominious failure of a thousand social panaceas of his own age and country), it will certainly “die out in about three hundred years;” while many more proclaim that, as a religion of supernatural origin and supernatural evidence, it is already dying, if not dead; it were surely not unreasonable to remind them that, even if Christianity *be* false, as they allege, they are utterly forgetting the maxims of a cautious induction, in saying that it will therefore cease to exert dominion over mankind. What proof is there of this? Whether true or false, it has already survived numberless revolutions of human opinions, and all sorts of changes and assaults. It is not confined, like other religions,

to any one race—to any one clime—or any one form of political constitution. While it transmigrates freely from race to race, and clime to clime, its chief home, too, is still in the bosom of enterprise, wealth, science, and civilisation; and it is; at this moment most powerful amongst the nations that have most of these. If not true, it has such an *appearance* of truth as to have satisfied many of the acutest and most powerful intellects of the species;—a Bacon, a Pascal, a Leibnitz, a Locke, a Newton, a Butler;—such an appearance of truth as to have enlisted in its support an immense array of genius and learning: genius and learning, not only in some sense professional, and often wrongfully represented as therefore interested, but much of both, strictly extra-professional; animated to its defence by nothing but a conviction of the force of the arguments by which its truth is sustained, and that “hope full of immortality” which its promises have inspired. Under such circumstances it must appear equally rash and gratuitous to suppose, even if it be a delusion, that an institute, which has thus enlisted the sympathies of so many of the greatest minds of all races and of all ages—which is alone stable and progressive amidst instability and fluctuation,—will *soon* come to an end. Still more absurdly premature is it to raise a paean over its fall, upon every new attack upon it, when it has already survived so many. This, in fact, is a tone which, though every age renews it, should long since have been rebuked by the constant falsification of similar prophecies, from the time of Julian to the time of Bolingbroke, and from the time of Bolingbroke to the time of Strauss. As Addison, if we mistake not, humorously tells the Atheist, that he is hasty in his logic when he infers that if there be no God, immortality must be a delusion; since, if chance has actually found him a place in

this bad world, it *may*, perchance, hereafter find him another place in a worse ; — so we say, that if Christianity be a delusion, since it is a delusion which has been proof against so much of bitter opposition, and has imposed upon such hosts of mighty intellects, there is nothing to show that it will not do so still, in spite of the efforts either of a Proudhon or a Strauss. Such a tone was, perhaps, never so triumphant as during the heat of the Deistical controversy in our own country, and to which Butler alludes with so much characteristic but deeply satirical simplicity, in the preface to his great work : — “ It is come,” says he, “ I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. . . . On the contrary, thus much at least will here be found, not taken for granted, but proved, that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured as he is of his own being, *that it is not, however, so clear that there is nothing in it.*” The Christian, we conceive, may now say the same to the new race of infidels in our own day. Christianity, we doubt not, will still live, when they and their works, and the refutations of their works, are alike forgotten ; and a fresh series of attacks and defences shall have occupied for a while (as so many others have done) the attention of the world. Christianity, like Rome, has had both the Gaul and Hannibal at her gates : But as the “ Eternal City,” in the latter case, calmly offered for sale, and sold, at an undepreciated price, the very ground on which the Carthaginian had fixed his camp, with equal calmness may Christianity imitate her example of magnanimity. She may feel assured that, as in so many past instances of premature triumph, on the part of her enemies, the ground they occupy will one day

be her own ; that the very discoveries, apparently hostile, of science and philosophy, will be ultimately found elements of her strength. Thus has it been, to a great extent, with the discoveries in chronology and history ; and thus it will be, we are confident (and to a certain extent has been already), with those in geology. That science has done much, not only to render the old theories of Atheism untenable, and to familiarise the minds of men to the idea of miracles, by that of successive creations, but to confirm the Scriptural statement of the comparatively recent origin of our race. Only the men of science and the men of theology must alike guard against the besetting fallacy of their kind,—that of too hastily taking for granted that they already know the whole of their respective sciences, and of forgetting the declaration of the Apostle, equally true of all man's attainments, whether in one department of science or another,—“We know but in part, and we prophesy but in part.”

Though Socrates perhaps expressed himself too absolutely when he said that “he only knew that he knew nothing,” yet a tinge of the same spirit—a deep conviction of the profound ignorance of the human mind, even at its best—has ever been a characteristic of the most comprehensive genius. It is a topic on which it has been fond of mournfully dilating. It is thus with Socrates, with Plato, with Bacon (even amidst all his magnificent aspirations and bold predictions), with Newton, with Pascal, and especially with Butler, in whom, if in any, the sentiment is carried to excess. It need not be said that it is seldom found in the writings of those modern speculators who rush, in the hardihood of their adventurous logic, on a solution of the problems of the Absolute and the Infinite, and resolve in delightfully brief demonstrations the mightiest problems of the universe ; those great enigmas,

from which true philosophy shrinks, not because it has never ventured to think of them, but because it has thought of them enough to know that it is in vain to attempt their solution. To know the limits of human philosophy is "the better part" of all philosophy; and though the conviction of our ignorance is humiliating, it is, like every true conviction, salutary. Amidst this night of the soul, bright stars — far distant fountains of illumination — are wont to steal out, which shine not while the imagined Sun of reason is above the horizon! and it is in that night, as in the darkness of outward nature, that we gain our only true ideas of the illimitable dimensions of the universe, and of our true position in it.

Meanwhile we conclude that God has created "two great lights,"—the greater light to rule man's busy day—and that is Reason; and the lesser to rule his contemplative night—and that is Faith.

But Faith herself shines only so long as she reflects some faint illumination from the brighter orb.

APPENDIX.

No. I., pp. 56—70.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DR. STRAUSS'
LIFE OF JESUS.

THE inadmissibility of the principle of Dr. Strauss's theory of the "mythical" origin of Christianity could alone be discussed within the contracted limits of the preceding essay. It is there contended, and, it is conceived, with reason, that his theory does not account even for the origin, much less for the success, of *such* a "myth" as Christianity. It does not account for the *origin*; since the more the historic conditions of the problem are investigated, the more improbable will it appear that such a "myth"—whether we look at its intellectual or moral characteristics—could have been the product of the Jewish mind of any age, and its known prepossessions; and quite as improbable that if it could have been such a wild-growth of popular fancy and legend, it should have accidentally assumed such elaborate, and, in the judgment of so many acute minds, such irrefragable, proofs of historic credibility. The theory accounts still less for its *success*; inasmuch as it is incredible that such a "myth," involving, if only a "myth," such extravagant and preposterous demands on credulity, should, in the absence of the wonderful facts which form its basis, be actually received as *fact*, not only by a large portion of the Jews,

but by still larger portions of many other nations, whose whole sympathies and antipathies, prejudices and prepossessions, were enlisted against it; and who, so far from being interested in the Jewish legends, in which it is supposed to have germinated, recoiled with intense repugnance from them all. In truth nothing less than a universal lunacy of the nations will account, under such circumstances, for its reception by them.

Mere admiration of the *beauty* of such a "myth" surely cannot account for such a fact. Different races and nations admire, and admire intensely, Homer's *Iliad*, the *Arabian Nights* and Shakspeare's Plays; but these immortal works have never advanced one inch for all that towards being received as true history. As little can the mere *assumption* of Divine authority on the part of such legends solve the mystery: such assumptions in an enlightened age, and especially among races alien from the nation who have originated such pretensions, are certain to provoke scepticism far more strongly than they invite superstition. The Classical mythology, the Egyptian mythology, and the Hindoo mythology (always restricted to the nations in whose remote barbarism they originated, and with whose immemorial traditions they were intertwined), may be studied long enough before they make a single proselyte among those different races and different nations who did receive, who have received, and who persist in receiving, the *myths* of Christianity as historic *verities*. So that the very least that can be said is, that the compilers of the gospel have, with an utterly incomprehensible ingenuity, infinitely transcended all other masters of fable and legend, and have succeeded in making wilder dreams than ever poet feigned wear to minds of different ages and races (for here lies the stress of the argument) the aspect of genuine history. But though the *principle* alone of Dr. Strauss'

theory could be considered in the previous pages, it seemed desirable to describe a little more fully some of the prevailing characteristics of his insidious work. This, after a calm and, so far as possible, impartial study of it, is accordingly attempted in the ensuing pages. To track the author into all his details would, of course, require a work nearly as voluminous as his own. But it is conceived that the following observations, however general, may be in some degree useful in putting the young and unlearned reader upon his guard.

First, then; it may be observed, that the very title of the work is a ludicrous misnomer. Instead of being called "The Life of Jesus," ("critically examined," or otherwise) it ought rather to be intitled "A *collection* of all the difficulties and discrepancies which honest criticism has discovered, and perverted ingenuity has imagined, in the four Evangelists."*

Secondly; though composed certainly in a very calm, or rather in a very frigid, style, there perhaps never was a book which more completely realised the idea conveyed in a favourite term of the Germans, "one-sidedness" (*einsitigkeit*).

Every candid mind must admit that the question of the truth of Christianity is a question of conflicting probabilities. Now, though we might not expect to find in Strauss' work, devoted as it is to a special branch of the vast theme, an examination and refutation of the evidence for the truth of Christianity as derived from external sources (the incredibility, nay, the *impossibility* of miracles he quietly takes for granted†), yet one might justly have expected that in

* "As for his doctrines," Quinet says, "there is not, I think, one of his boldest propositions which had not previously been advanced, sustained, and debated. How, then, can we account for the celebrity of a work which appears to be the result of a *general spoliation*?"

† As this is an important point, it may be as well to cite Dr.

endeavouring to reduce the gospels to fiction, by exhibiting their *supposed discrepancies*, he would have given some space at least to the consideration of those immensely varied *internal* indications of truthfulness, artlessness, and reality; of those undesigned, because deeply latent, coincidences, with which they obviously abound. These indications of historic verity would, at first sight, seem beyond the reach of deliberate fiction, and much more of accident; while in number they far exceed the aggregate of those discrepancies with which, in justice, they ought to be confronted and compared. Dr. Strauss cannot but be aware that this general exquisite tone of historic reality is not imaginary; inasmuch as, whether the effect of "art" or "accident," it has imposed on many of the acutest minds, and still imposes on them, in spite of all the efforts of that long array of infidels whose rusty weapons he has burnished and sharpened. Yet from Dr. Strauss' work not the slightest notion could be formed, that there were any such evidences to be examined; one would suppose that the gospels were little more than a tissue of contradictions and discrepancies, and had little else to recommend them to mankind; whose credulous deference to them, if this were true, would be a perfectly unaccountable phenomenon, more incredible than any of the miracles our author pronounces impossible. Indeed, prudence itself should have made him more candid; for the more incongruous and contradictory he proves the gospels, the more arduous he makes the problem imposed on infidelity — of accounting for their reception and success. If nothing were in them but what he finds

Strauss' express words: — "Indeed no just notion of the true nature of history is possible, without a perception of the inviolability of the chain of second causes and of the *impossibility of miracles*." Vol. i. Introduction, sect. 13. p. 64, English Translation. All the author had to do was to prove this, and he might have spared his large volumes of minute criticism.

there,—*that* difficulty neither he nor any man would have had to encounter.

Dr. Strauss may say, perhaps, that it was not his business to exhibit the other side of the argument ; we believe him ; or rather, we believe that it was not his *pleasure* ; for it *was* his business. The truth is, he was an advocate, not a judge ; a special pleader for infidelity, not the dispassionate investigator he would be thought to be ; otherwise he could not have failed to notice some of those opposing considerations which have imposed, if they are ill founded, on many of the greatest minds of the species ; which made a Newton say, that he discerned more indications of genuineness, authenticity, and truthfulness in the Scriptures than in any other books whatsoever.

A mind intent on truth would have endeavoured to balance the evidence ; it is sufficient for Dr. Strauss to exhibit one side. It is as though he hoped, and not vainly (for, from the constitution of the human mind, it is assuredly a very probable result), that, by keeping the thoughts of the reader intent for a sufficient time *exclusively* on alleged objections and discrepancies, he might produce, by their mere accumulation, an effect which would be in some danger of being dissipated either by the statement of the counter-evidence or by a statement of only the *real* difficulties. To let the mind exist for a time in an atmosphere of doubt—to breathe little but *azote*—is one of the easiest and most compendious ways of destroying faith.* Accord-

* This is often the effect even of works the very object of which is the *refutation* of objections, if they are *exclusively* devoted to such refutation. Speaking of some such works Dr. Graves, in the introduction to his work on the Pentateuch, well observes: "Those who were employed in refuting the objections of any one particular antagonist, were almost inevitably led to magnify these objections beyond their relative importance in any general consideration of the subject. The same writers also were frequently induced to employ their attention almost exclusively on such pas-

ingly our author seems much more solicitous about the number than about the quality of the objections; and is often as fond of exaggerating the task of reconciling points, even where he at last allows that reconciliation is possible, as of exhibiting the force of more formidable objections. In a word, there is no work in the perusal of which it is more necessary for the reader to remember the maxim, "*audi alteram partem.*"

Thirdly; but whether it was Dr. Strauss' exclusive business or pleasure—whichever the reader pleases—to detect "holes" in the garments of the evangelists, has he ever made the rents which he pretends only to find? In a word, has he dealt fairly by the *objections*? We fearlessly answer that he has not. The paraded discrepancies are frequently assumed; sometimes even manufactured.

Let us take a single example by way of illustration. The account of the entertainment given to Jesus at Bethany before the last Passover, which has often attracted the attention of the Harmonists, is related by Matthew, Mark, and John. It is nearly the universal opinion of critics, that these evangelists refer to the

sages as seemed obscure or objectionable, and pass with less distinct notice the clear and direct arguments and proofs which were to be derived from those parts of the Sacred History which scepticism itself could scarcely venture to attack; thus suffering the adversary of revealed truth to lead its advocate from the strongest to the weakest ground, and prevent him from employing those topics which would operate most powerfully on every candid and unprejudiced mind. Works constructed on this plan have sometimes a most pernicious effect on the young, the uninformed, and the wavering; they lead them to consider Revelation as consisting chiefly of obscurities, and founded chiefly on questionable facts; while, on the contrary, the great truths it establishes are as clear and as intelligible as they are important; and the series of proofs on which it rests, when viewed in their natural order, are so firmly connected and plainly conclusive, that if considered with attention and candour, they carry with them the fullest conviction."

same event, and that the entertainment is a totally different one from that described by Luke, ch. vii. 36—50. This last was apparently given at a different time, certainly in a different place, and under different circumstances. One incident indeed of a similar nature is recorded in both; namely, the grateful act of a woman (very differently characterised however in the two cases), who shows her love to the Lord by a costly act of personal attention. Everything else is different.*

Now, in the account of the entertainment at Bethany, as described by Matthew, Mark, and John, there is absolutely *no note of time*; and unless such time were fixed in the narrative itself, or the narrative itself formed part of a work of professed chronology, we should have no right to fix it; for nothing is more common in regular history, and still more in biographical *collectanea* (which is probably the most characteristic description of the Gospels), to introduce an incident—not because it occurred at the same time with those amidst which it is inserted—but to throw some light on them, or supply some link in relation to them.†

* Greswell says, “The unction at Bethany is recorded by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. John, between any of whose accounts and Luke, vii. 36—50, where also an unction is related, the difference is, as I think, so palpable and so indisputable, that, notwithstanding the trouble which some learned men have taken to prove them the same, I should consider it a waste of time and argument seriously to prove them distinct.” — *Greswell's Dissertations upon the Harmony of the Gospels*, vol. ii. p. 127.

† John says (xii. 1.) that Christ came to Bethany “six days before the Passover;” and in v. 12. that “on the morrow” he made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The account of the entertainment, as also a statement of the resort of many Jews to Bethany to see Jesus, falls between these notes of time; if then it did not occur on the evening previous to the entry (Jesus returned to Bethany, let us recollect on several successive evenings), John may have *anticipated* these transactions at Bethany for some special reason; and in this case the *ἡ ἐκείνη* will be connected with the note of time

Yet Strauss, without qualification, says, "Neither is the *time* of the occurrence precisely the same; for, according to *Matthew and Mark*, the scene takes place after the solemn entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, only *two days*, at the utmost, before the Passover; according to *John*, on the other hand, before the entrance, as early as *six days* prior to the Passover." This *positive* statement of the time (as if it were specified in the evangelists, while in fact it is merely inferred by Strauss from the context), is a specimen of his usual licence. He assumes that he may treat the gospels as if they were chronological tables. Though no date is affixed to the incident in question, he chooses to place it between the two nearest dates he can find; and then gives the date, not as if it were an inference of his own, but as if the evangelists had inserted it in the account of the incident itself!

Again; Matthew and Mark say, the woman poured the ointment on Christ's head; John, that she anointed his feet. Here is another discrepancy, exclaims Dr. Strauss. How so? the reader rejoins. May not both be true?—Once more; Matthew says, that "his disciples"—Mark, that "some of them who were present"—John, that "Judas"—manifested indignation at the spectacle. Here are more discrepancies, exclaims Dr. Strauss. Why so? it may be retorted again. May

in the first verse of the chapter. On the other hand, if it be more natural to connect that note of time with the entertainment, it does not prevent the supposition that, for some special reason (as Greswell and Robinson both think) Matthew and Mark may have *postponed* their account of it. One states that two days before the Passover, Jesus predicts his approaching betrayal, and the other that at that date his enemies were plotting his death. Both afterwards give an account of the incident at Bethany, but, like John, without *any note of time*. Neither John nor they limit the time in the incident itself; if the context in John be assumed to fix it, we need not assume that theirs does; if theirs be assumed to fix it, we need not assume that John's does. Strauss assumes both, and then speaks as if he had assumed nothing.

not all have been right? And to show that the narrative involves no contradiction, may it not be asked, whether, if the *same* historian had said "that the woman broke an alabaster box of ointment, and both poured the perfume on the Lord's head, and *also* anointed his feet — that some who were present murmured, and amongst the rest Judas," would Dr. Strauss, or any one else, have thought there was any thing in it which required criticism? Why then should he affirm this, because a portion of the facts appears in one historian, and a portion in another?

Again; Matthew and Mark expressly describe this entertainment in Bethany as taking place at the house of "Simon the Leper." John does not mention the name of the host; but still states that it was in Bethany; that Mary the sister of Lazarus was the person who broke the box of ointment; that Martha served. Matthew and Mark were most probably mistaken, argues Dr. Strauss; from the above particulars, it *must* have been the house of Lazarus where the entertainment was given! And this too, although Lazarus himself is introduced in terms which much more naturally suggest the idea that he was a guest rather than the host. "He was one of those who sat at table with Jesus" (τῶν συνανακειμένων αὐτῷ). The reason, however, of the arbitrary conjecture is immediately obvious. Having by this licence of suppositions *proved*, in his way, that John meant that the scene took place in the house of Lazarus, though he does not say that it did; and that therefore Matthew and Mark are in error, when they positively say it took place *elsewhere*, he not only concludes that Matthew and Mark hastily wrote on erroneous information; but that such divergences (entirely of his own making, be it remembered) justify the supposition that the wholly different narrative given by Luke is but a distorted

account of the same entertainment, and affords a further proof of the facility with which the legends of the Gospel were varied, augmented, and embellished! That is, having tortured the very variations in the *same* narrative (which simply prove that there was no collusion) into a proof that parts of the narrative are successive products of fiction, he proceeds to argue that a narrative of a totally different event is but another variation of the same variations; and then, assuming that it was so, proceeds complacently to draw his conclusion that nearly the whole is divested of historic credibility. Yet he has nothing whatever to found this assumed identification of the two narratives upon, except that it does not seem probable that *two* women should have proffered a not unusual mark of respect (though more costly than usual) to an honoured guest; costly in this case, because proportionate to the love and veneration of the parties towards their great Master and Benefactor.

In short, there is nothing which may not be proved or disproved in history by such a style of criticism — such a licence of conjecture and assumption. There are no historic writers in the world whose narratives might not be resolved into *myths* by the consistent application of the same artifices.

There is no injustice in saying that a very large proportion of the difficulties on which Dr. Strauss expatiates are, in the same manner, difficulties which he assumes to be insoluble, because he first assumes the conditions which make them so. Such a critic is to historic truth, what the concave lens is to light. Parallel rays become divergent, and convergent rays are rendered parallel. At all events, they have a focus as distant as our author chooses to place it.

Fourthly; our author appears to act on certain comprehensive, though novel canons of historic criti-

cism, the adoption of which renders his present task, or any other achievement of the like kind which he may propose to himself, a very easy one; as first, that if an event be not in *his* judgment probable, that circumstance shall often be sufficient at once to neutralize the positive testimony which affirms it; secondly, that if he can point to an event or narrative in the Old Testament *analogous* to one in the New, the former may be adduced as a proof of the mythical origin of the latter; thirdly, that if the "not probable" reaches, in *his* judgment, the impossible (in which category he ranks both miracle and prophecy), it is to be rejected at once; which of course *ought* to supersede all discussion with regard to the majority of the narratives of the gospels; fourthly, if a narrative is summary and general, it may be suspected that the author had no personal knowledge of the facts; if it is full of little dramatic traits, he may be suspected of embellishment. A word or two on each of these, accompanied by as many illustrations.*

* The more important of these novel canons are expressly avowed by Strauss, in laying down his "criteria by which to distinguish the unhistorical in the gospel narrative." — *Introduction*, sect. 16. We may summarily reject, he tells us, all miracles, prophecies, narratives of angels and of demons, and the like, as simply "impossible" and "irreconcilable with the known and universal laws which govern the course of events;" he deciding (but, unhappily, not *proving*) that "the absolute cause *never* disturbs the chain of secondary causes by single arbitrary acts of interposition." — We are, in a similar manner, to regard, with extreme suspicion, whatever does not follow the *ordinary* experience of mortals; as, for example, any very extraordinary precocity in an individual; or what is "psychologically improbable," as when a person is described as "feeling, thinking, acting, in a manner directly opposed to his own habitual mode and that of men in general;" a rule which, considering that half history is a record of human inconsistencies — many of them outrageous enough — is, even on Strauss' theory, to be "cautiously applied." Indeed, if *his* theory of Christianity be true, its reception by mankind is itself the strangest of all these "psychological" inconsistencies; so that he ought by rights to abandon

1. Such and such an event, or such and such a conjunction of events, Dr. Strauss often thinks it sufficient at once to dismiss, as in his judgment *improbable*. Thus he finds that Jesus is represented as making a disclosure of his Messiahship to the woman of Samaria. "What could induce Jesus to send roaming into the futurity of religious history the contemplation of a woman, whom he should rather have induced to *examine herself, and to ponder on the corruptions of her own heart?*" And as Dr. Strauss can find no satisfactory answer unless it were a vain-glorious wish to elicit from her, "at any cost," an acknowledgement of his claims; and as it would be unjust to impute this design to Jesus, we must impute the incident to "the glorifying legend" or "the idealizing biographer."—He finds that it is stated that the disciples mistook these words of our Lord, "Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep;" it is improbable, he says.—He thinks the same of their misconstruction of his words at the well of Samaria, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "It is in the fourth evangelist's *manner*," says Dr. Strauss, "which we have learned to recognize by so many

his theory by this very *criterion* for justly applying it: and affirm either that Christianity *must* be true, or that it has *not* been believed.—Lastly, "If the form be poetical, or the actors converse in a more *diffuse* and elevated strain than might be *expected from their training and situations*, such discourses, at all events, are not to be regarded as historical;" but then, conveniently enough, the "absence of these marks of the 'unhistorical' are also quite compatible with the mythical character of the composition, "since the mythus often wears the most simple and apparently historical form." By these means, the banquet of history may be made as airy as that which feasted the eyes and mocked the stomach of the craving Sancho, in his island of Barataria. There is not a dish which the wand of our critical Pedro Rexio de Agüero cannot cause to vanish from the table; and it is well if he allows us the "hundred confected wafers, and a few thin slices of quince."

examples. They are amongst those carnal interpretations of expressions intended spiritually by Jesus, which are of habitual occurrence in the fourth gospel, and are therefore suspicious;” that is, whatever is *characteristic* of classes of persons must be suspicious, for such characteristic traits must be frequently recurrent.—He finds that the rulers are represented as mocking Christ on the cross, with the words, “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him;”—it is *improbable*, says Strauss, “for these words are taken from a Psalm, in which they are put into the mouth of the ungodly, and the Sanhedrists could not have adopted them without voluntarily assuming that character; which they would surely have taken care to avoid.” Hypocrites and murderers are are not so punctilious. As if *they* were likely to prove particularly solicitous about perfect consistency of character! It is a wonder he did not also prove that it is “improbable” that they would have *acted* like “the ungodly,” and thus rendered dubious the fact of the crucifixion.

In these instances of a liberal application of an entirely novel canon of historical criticism, no pains have been taken to select the worst. They are such as occur every few pages; and as we might have selected some examples less flagrant, so we might have given very many still more so. To us it appears that a man might just as well argue that, since the rout at Cressy and Poitiers is *à priori* improbable; the return of Bonaparte from Elba improbable; his expedition to Russia improbable, we are therefore at liberty to reject these, and a thousand other events. Indeed, there is hardly any thing that may not, in this quiet way, be rejected as improbable, unless it be that Dr. Strauss should ever find any thing that is *probable*.

But though full of arbitrary assumptions himself, he will scarcely allow hypothesis or conjecture, even when most fairly adopted by his opponents. It is strange and improbable, he argues, that supposing *Joseph* was compelled to repair to Bethlehem to the census, *Mary* should have gone with him, since only the males were required to go. "There might be a dozen reasons, of which we know nothing," exclaim the critics. "But they are all imaginary reasons," rejoins Dr. Strauss. "And is not your 'no reason' equally imaginary?" may surely be fairly retorted. "*You* are perpetually employing these 'no reasons.' Suffer us to imagine a few *reasons*; and we may do so with the more justice, inasmuch as any mode of reconciling alleged discrepancies of fact and statement, however hypothetical, is truly valid as a reply to your charge of *contradictions*; while an arbitrary assumption of 'no reasons' for a fact asserted by an historian is universally admitted to be one of the most precarious of all modes of reasoning."

2. If our author finds any event in the Old Testament *similar* to any in the New, such analogy (often faint enough) becomes forthwith the suggestive embryo of the evangelical narrative, or one of the elements out of which it was constructed, and determines it to be instantly of mythical origin. This is a convenient rule, since all history, sacred or profane, "while the constitution of human nature remains the same" (to quote the language of the philosophic Thucydides) will reproduce and exhibit closely analogous events. Does he find, for example, instances of celebrated Hebrews, the children of long childless parents? That is sufficient to account for the mythical tale of the Baptist's parentage! Does he find that Jesus is represented as seated by a "well," when the Samaritan woman met with him? It is that "idyllic locality

with which the old Hebrew legend associates so many critical incidents!"* Therefore, of course the incident is mythical. Jesus meets with a woman *there*; so did Eliezer meet with Rebekah, and Jacob with Rachel; and hence the evangelic fable! "Jesus begs of the woman to let him drink; so does Eliezer of Rebekah:" nothing less than demonstration, of course, that the Gospel narrative is but an adaptation of the Old Testament facts, or rather a new romance made out of an old one! The star of Bethlehem is similarly suggested by that in the prophecy of Balaam; and the transfiguration by the visit of Moses to Sinai. The birth of Christ is made known to the shepherds at Bethlehem, while "watching their flocks;" so is Moses "visited by a heavenly apparition" under somewhat similar circumstances, and "God took David from his sheepfolds to be the shepherd of his people." Who can fail to see that such incidents are the obvious germ of the evangelical *myth*?—Into what pleasant romance may we transform history, if we are at liberty to assume what have been ignorantly taken for "historic parallels" to be but variations of a common "legend." There is an end of all history, if we are to indulge conjecture in this way. A man may as well argue that the emulous valour of the two soldiers, T. Pulvio and L. Varenus, in the fifth book of Cæsar's Gallic war, was no doubt a fiction suggested by the narrative of the similar rivals in the fourth book of the *Anabasis* of Xenophon; or attribute the proffer of the crown to Cromwell and its rejection by him, to the similar event related of Cæsar.

* He who remembers what the "well" is and ever has been in the East, will little wonder that historic scenes are often connected with it. The frequent mention of this "idyllic locality" in Oriental narrative is hardly more "suspicious" than similar references to the ancient "forum" or the modern "market-place."

3. But when our author comes to the miraculous or the prophetic, then how delightfully easy is his task! His curt axiom of historical criticism—that the supernatural is incredible and impossible—instantly disposes of whole chapters which would otherwise seem impressed with every internal mark, and supported by every external proof, of their truthfulness. “The supernatural,” it is said, “here shows we are not on historic ground; there is so much about angels, demons, miracles; of course this is not to be literally believed, and cannot be true.”—Dr. Strauss vehemently exclaims against it as a *petitio principii*, if a critic assigns supernatural power as a solution of any difficulty. But then is it any worse than his *own petitio principii*—that a narrative is at once to be rejected, *because* it involves the preternatural? In fact, it only shows that neither party in this war of critical objections can bring the contest to a decisive termination. The question must be carried higher, and the previous *general* credibility of the evidence for Christianity ascertained and determined on the entire balance of evidence. Let that be established, and it will crush to atoms by its weight the frail fabric raised on a discrepancy here and there. On the other hand, let Dr. Strauss *prove* what he so preposterously takes for granted, “that miracles are impossible;” and he need not strain criticism, not to say honesty, to effect the downfall of a system which is absolutely dependent on its supernatural claims, and frankly avows that dependence.

But though Dr. Strauss generally relies in the case of miracles on his usual comprehensive *à priori* reason for rejecting them, he is sometimes at the superfluous pains of trying to prove them *historically improbable*; and then exhibits his usual licence of conjecture. Thus he thinks that since the resurrection of

Lazarus is not mentioned by the three first evangelists, it is most improbable that it should have been known by them; therefore it is all but certain that it was not known; if not known to them, it could only be from its not having occurred; therefore it is certainly to be rejected: an ingenious sorites, by which we may at any time dispense with the positive testimony of an historian, if we do not find what he relates, related also by other historians! But in this and other cases, if Dr. Strauss had but proved his postulatam that "a miracle is impossible," he might have dispensed with this circuitous way of proving, from assumptions of historic probabilities and improbabilities, that it is *also* in a high degree "improbable."

On the same axioms our author disposes at once, by one comprehensive excision, of all possibility of proofs from prophecy; prophecy cannot be true. Yet, as before, he here employs the assumptions he denies to others. It is unreasonable, in his judgment, to infer that any event mentioned in the New Testament is a proof of the truth of ancient prophecies; because we are there in the region of the "supernatural;" nay, by the ingenious assumptions *he* is pleased to make, it is impossible, even if there *are* true prophecies, that they can ever be proved to be so; since the moment he sees any apparent similarity between any statement in the Old Testament and any event in the New, that similarity, *ipso facto*, affords him indications of the mythical origin of the New Testament narrative; and the more exact the correspondence, the stronger the indications: so that the conformity of the event no longer proves the truth of the prophecy; but the fact of the prophecy is uniformly considered the *cause* of the "myth." We ought not perhaps to be much surprised if in a similar way some disciple of Dr. Strauss should prove that the Jews by a sort of dra-

matised myth have been pleased to "disperse" themselves "among all nations," and have done so at different periods of history, because they found in their ancient writings it became them to be zealous for the honour of their ancient lawgiver and prophets; that, in a similar manner, nations hostile to Christianity have embraced it, not because it was truly predicted that they should, but in order to render that declaration a true prediction; and that even such phenomena as Dr. Strauss—apparently foreshadowed in the most distinct manner—are no more than a sort of practical myths to which those prophecies have given rise! At all events, it is impossible for him to fail; for if any one pleads the conformity of an event with the prediction as a proof of the reality of the latter, our author is immediately armed with his comprehensive *postulatum*, as in the case of miracles:—"We here get into the region of the supernatural; of course nothing is to be believed there." Have we any more business to believe his easy assumptions, that circumstantial, and seemingly well-attested histories, are no more than universally accredited myths, constructed because men were pre-disposed to realize ancient prophecy? especially in the many cases, in which so far as we know the conditions of their history, they certainly could not have thus realized them, if they would, and so far as we can judge of human motives, would not have realised them in *such* a form if they could?

And here it may be worth while to observe some of the strange consequences which must follow from the admission of Dr. Strauss' theory of the mythical origin of Christianity, namely, that it was little more than a super-foetation on Jewish prejudices, and the natural product of Messianic legends and fables. It appears, first, that the genius of that nation having ever been pre-eminently exclusive, this product of

their *prejudices* is mainly characterised by the renunciation of their *prejudices* ; secondly, that though the peculiar product of their *national* prepossessions, it was rejected and is still rejected by the great majority of the *nation* ; thirdly, that though their ancient prophecies led them to dote upon the idea of a triumphant and conquering Messiah, — a prepossession in which the early advocates of Christianity seem to have originally had their full share, — this product of their prepossessions is directly opposed to that notion, and exhibits to them the repulsive novelty of a crucified and suffering Messiah ; fourthly, that though their prepossessions prompted them, as they ever had done, to monopolise the favour of the Deity, these prepossessions somehow dictated a system which lays the axe at the root of that darling hypothesis ; fifthly, that this product of national prepossessions, founded on old Messianic fables and myths, though it was *not* acceptable to the taste of the majority of the nation, yet was extensively received by nations to which not only *no* Messianic myths could have been acceptable, but to which all Messianic myths must have been odious ; that, in short, the system did not meet the prejudices of those who, according to the theory, must have been *prejudiced* in its favour ; and *did* suit the prejudices of those who, according to that or any other theory, must have been *prejudiced* against it ! A curious hypothesis it would certainly be — and yet a strictly parallel one — which should assure us that a certain religious institution (making the most enormous demands on men's credulity, if false) was the natural effect of the previous historic development and ancient prepossessions of the English, which yet was somehow vehemently rejected by the bulk of the English ; but was nevertheless received implicitly by the French and other nations, their mortal enemies, to the rejec-

tion of all the institutions which had been the growth of *their own* historical development and ancient prepossessions. The fact is, that Christianity, so far from being the natural product of the previous condition of the Jewish nation, was as directly opposed to all which venerable prepossession and ancestral pride taught them most fondly to cherish, as it was to the prejudices, superstitions, and philosophy of the nations around them. St. Paul truly represents the matter when he says (in the words cited in the preceding essay) that "Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

4. Another ingenious artifice of our author (though not so systematically adopted as the preceding) is that by his arbitrary requirements, the just conditions of historical representation can never be fulfilled. Is a narrative minutely circumstantial—full of those little traits, those incidental touches and allusions, which are in general regarded as proofs of reality and truthfulness "beyond the reach of art"? They are dramatic embellishments designed to enhance the verisimilitude of the story. Is the narrative bare and meagre? That very generality and vagueness of statement must pass for proof that the facts are not given by any one intimate with the facts. Some of our author's countrymen have justly commented on this convenient ambiguity in the decisions of the critical oracle. He has been accused, he says, of "using both the particularity and the brevity of narratives, as proofs of their mythical character." And in spite of his defence, most justly. "In all cases," he tells us, "in which there are extant two accounts of a single fact, the one full, the other concise, opinions may be divided as to which of them is the original. *When* these accounts have been liable to the modifications of tradition, it is important to bear in mind that tradition has *two* tendencies; the one to sublimate the concrete

into the abstract, the individual into the general; the other, not less essential, to substitute arbitrary fictions for the historical reality which is lost. If then we put the want of precision in the narrative of the first evangelist to the account of the former *function* of the legend, ought we at once to regard the precision and dramatic effect of the other gospels as a proof that their authors were eye-witnesses? Must we not rather *examine* whether these qualities be not derived from the second function of the legend?"

We soon see how summary this examination is, and in what, as a matter of course, it results. As thus; — "In detailed narratives, of which we shall presently notice many examples, while Matthew simply tells what Jesus said on a certain occasion, the two other evangelists are able to describe the glance with which his words were accompanied. (Mark, iii. 5.; x. 21.; Luke, vi. 10.) On the mention of a blind beggar of Jericho, Mark is careful to give us his name, and the name of his father (x. 46). From these *particulars* we might *already augur* what the *examination* of single narratives will prove: namely, that the *copiousness of Mark and Luke is the product of the second function of the legend*, which we may call the *function of embellishment*." — With two such "functions" of the "legend," the "function" of the historical critic becomes easy enough.

Almost every inconvenient narrative may of course easily be found too long or too short, too meagre or too minute. On such principles, if Truth herself were to *photograph* a scene of history, it would be competent to Dr. Strauss to prove that her rays were flatterers; he might exclaim, with Miss Edgeworth's Irishman, "that the picture was more *like* than the original."

Fifthly: At one feature in Dr. Strauss' work men will certainly do well to wonder. It is at the perfec-

tion which the critical temperament may attain. It might *à priori* have been thought impossible that any man, whatever his conviction that the wonderful creations of the New Testament were fictions or myths, could have glowed so little in treating of them—could have felt so little their sublimity or beauty—could have so effectually suppressed all emotion in applying to them the canons of his minute criticism—or evinced so little remorse in the attempt to destroy the impression of their historic reality. On the score of taste alone, few would have supposed it possible that a man could have treated the scene of the Last Supper—the still more wonderful scenes of Gethsemane—or those of the Cross and Sepulchre, with so little power of appreciating their intense beauty, sublimity, and pathos. An iconoclast, however stolid, could hardly take up his hammer to shiver to atoms the most exquisite forms of sculpture with the feelings of a common stonemason. It would be difficult to conceive that there is another in all the world to match our author in the *nil admirari* vein—in the power of preserving a stoical apathy in the presence of (to say the least) the divinest conceptions of uninspired genius; or one who is so utterly a stranger to that enthusiasm which must enter as an integral element into the constitution of a critic, if he is to be equipped for the discharge of any of the more elevated functions of criticism. Some degree of this enthusiasm, indeed, is essential to their right performance; and in its utter absence, a truly great critic can no more be formed, even though he possess cart-loads of minute learning, than any number of skeletons can make a living man. How different is the tone in which, with similar infidelity, a more poetic soul, like that of Byron or Shelley, has often broken out into spontaneous

homage to the glorious poetry of the Old and New Testament!

It may be said, perhaps, that Dr. Strauss thought it his duty to suppress all emotion; if so, it must be confessed he has completely succeeded in suppressing all signs of it. It is not every man who could sponge out the pictures of Raphael without a faltering hand; or march through the galleries of the Louvre or the British Museum with the sole purpose of applying his six-inch rule to the feet and hands of each ancient statue, in order to ascertain that they exactly corresponded in length; or find out, by chipping them with his hammer — by knocking off a nose here, and an ear there — the precise mineralogical character of the stone or marble from which they were chiselled. He gives us, more perfectly than any other critic, a notion of that class of men who, in the bitter language of one of our own poets, can

“Botanize upon their mother’s grave.” *

* When Dr. Strauss does deviate (as he sometimes does) from the equanimity of criticism, it certainly is not in the direction of a genial admiration for moral beauty, or sublimity, or pathos. It is to indulge himself in some approach to a joke or sneer, in which, unhappily, the will to be witty has not been seconded by nature. Thus, when commenting on our Lord’s triumphal procession into Jerusalem on the ass on which man had never before ridden, he thinks it decorous to say, “One does not understand how Jesus could designedly increase the difficulty of his progress, by the choice of a hitherto unriden animal; which, unless he kept it in order by Divine omnipotence (for the most consummate human skill would not suffice for this on his first riding), must inevitably have occasioned much disturbance to the triumphal procession. To such an inconvenience Jesus would assuredly not have exposed himself without a cogent reason. The authors of the intermediate gospels did not hesitate to receive this trait into their memoirs, because they, indeed, in writing, would not experience the same inconvenience from the undisciplined animal which it must have caused to Jesus in riding.” It is not in every man’s power to be witty; but it is in every man’s power, to be decent. If not too much to ask, we should request Dr. Strauss in his next edition, to relapse, in this and some few other pas-

It may be said that this is a question of taste. It is, but not of taste only; for, as already said, the possession of something like a *soul* is of much importance in relation to all the higher functions of criticism. A more genial temperament would not only have naturally given another tone to many of the criticisms of Strauss, but is absolutely essential to the right appreciation of many of the points of which he treats. As it is, he resembles many a commentator on our own Shakspeare, whose proper sphere is so exclusively the investigation of petty details, trivial anachronisms, incongruities of costume, and errors in geography, that they never attempt criticisms of a higher order without displaying their incompetence, and creating the very problems which they then strive to solve. In like manner Strauss often makes difficulties, when in reality there are none, and where many more philosophic critics have felt that there is none. Thus, to take a single example; he discovers something absolutely incredible in John's mission to Jesus, to inquire whether he was indeed the "Messiah;" which, says he, after the scene at his baptism, John *could* not doubt. The probability of such doubt, only a deeper knowledge of human nature than our critic probably possesses, could teach him. When we consider the strange mutations of the human mind, under different circumstances of gladness or depression, from the liveliest hopes to the most abject fears,—the sudden cloud

sages, into his native stolidity. It would be friendly advice, even for his own sake; for the "gods have not made him witty," any more than they made poor Audrey "poetical;" and although it is true that he might choose subjects for his unwieldy humour in which he might give less pain to his readers, it is impossible that he should choose any, however light or merry, in which such humour as his could give them pleasure. His friends should remind him that it is more easy to imitate Gibbon's infidelity than Gibbon's wit.

of scepticism which sometimes troubles the brightness of the most undoubted conviction, and from which even the mind of a Chillingworth or a Pascal has not been always free, — the transient catalepsy which will sometimes seize the strongest faith, when strongly tried ; — when we add to these general considerations the particular causes of depression in the present case, partly physical, and partly mental, but all tending to produce the result in question ; — the influences of suffering and imprisonment, — the “ sickness of heart ” which is proverbially the effect of “ hope long delayed,” — the obscurity and meanness of the supposed Messiah, contrasted probably with recently vivid expectations not only of his sudden glory, but of his assumption of a too Jewish *species* of glory (for there is no reason to believe that even the Baptist was perfectly defecated from all Jewish prejudices) ; when we consider all these things, the temporary invasion of painful perplexity related by the Evangelists is any thing but unnatural ; and, with such a doubt, the historic reality of the whole simple narrative, and Christ’s words, of touching and solemn admonition, beautifully harmonise — “ And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me ! ” To those who are deeply read in human nature, the phenomenon will produce little wonder ; for we well know that men *have* come to doubt of facts of which they have been as plenary convinced as if they had seen a miracle for their confirmation ; that is, they have distrusted their own senses ; and even a miracle appeals, and can appeal, to nothing stronger. In an age when a belief in the Supernatural, and that referrible to two opposite sources, was at all events common, it is still less wonderful that men should have sometimes had a momentary doubt of the heavenly source of visions, of which memory could give them no stronger proofs

than of their past sensations ; and even of these it appears men may be driven to doubt. Least of all, ought *Dr. Strauss* to wonder, since, upon his principles, even if he *were* to see a miracle, he must necessarily believe that his very senses have played him false ; he having predetermined that a “miracle is impossible.”*

Dr. Strauss closes his volumes by a solemn inquiry, which not only renders it difficult to suppose that the frigidity of his temperament has not affected his heart as well as his head, but almost makes one doubt whether he be not a mythical personage himself ; so contrary are all the indications it gives to those with which one would wish to associate intelligent and honourable humanity. He makes it a grave question, whether one who has ceased to believe in the historic validity of Christianity can rightfully occupy the post, and play the part — it is a very appropriate phrase — of a Christian minister and pastor in the Church of Christ ; performing its rites and preaching its doctrines, in a sense totally different from that which his flock attach to them ; and disguising, all the time, his real sentiments and real convictions, though he knows that the very men who listen to his words, and receive the sacred elements at his hands, would, could they penetrate his disguise, despise and abhor him as one of the most contemptible of hypocrites ! Truly, with whatever success Dr. Strauss may have reduced the history of Christianity to fable, he has certainly succeeded in

* Even supposing the gospels to be fictions or myths, we greatly doubt whether, in such cases as that here treated, the men who could compose such parables, describe such scenes, portray such characters, and weave such an artful texture of *quasi*-history, were not likely to be far better judges of the “psychologically improbable” than any Dr. Strauss ; just as in any similar decision against Shakspeare, the chances would be that he had read Truth and Nature too profoundly for his critics.

metamorphosing its morality, and, with that, all the morality of every other religion. Out of Germany, we believe such a question as Dr. Strauss has calmly discussed could not be discussed at all; and even in Germany, few, it may be suspected, would choose thus openly to plead it. Well may Menzel exclaim, "In our learned age every thing depends on Hermeneutics. A man might become a Bonze, and swear upon the symbolic books of Fo, and yet, by means of a dexterous exegesis, invest the stupid books with as rational a meaning as he pleased. They do not alter the word; they swear upon it, *and think of something else.*"

In one respect, the work of Dr. Strauss has been of excellent service. He has done much, not indeed to render the old hypotheses of Naturalism untenable—for that they always were—but to expose their utter absurdity. He has very successfully unroofed and dismantled these theories, and left them in desolation. Henceforth, nothing is left their inhabitants but to migrate into the land of *myths*, or take refuge in unsophisticated Christianity.

Such a work as that of Dr. Strauss is calculated to do some service also in two other ways: 1st. Since the marks of truth and reality, the minute harmonies and undesigned, and often most refined, coincidences in the evangelic history are much more numerous than the discrepancies, these last cannot turn the scale; while they, at least, prove most evidently that the evangelists did not write in concert: if they had, they would, certainly in the more important cases, have taken care to obviate them. If they did not write in concert, then the "substantial unity" of their narratives, taken in connection with their "circumstantial variety," forms the strongest proof of their historic worth. 2dly. As many of the internal proofs of the historic truthfulness of the Scriptures have been provoked by

the attacks of infidelity, and probably would have lain hidden for ages, had not infidelity elicited them, the same will assuredly be the result—and in a great measure has been so—in the present case. Many of the discrepancies, having been shown to be perfectly reconcilable, are being transferred to the other side of the account, and more and more will be so as time rolls on; while those which are *not* reconcilable, and yet cannot be *proved* to involve contradictions, are at least so many arguments for the independence of the evangelic testimonies.

It may be not unreasonably surmised that the existence of such variations, if not essential to the validity of the gospel testimony, yet involves (such is the perverseness of man) fewer provocatives of his doubts and hostility than any other alternative that could have been devised. In this, as in other instances, it will probably in time be discovered that God has in mercy exacted the least arduous test of man's faith which could be a reasonable test at all. It is not difficult to conjecture what course infidelity would have taken, had the testimony reached us in any other form. If the evangelical history had been attested only by one writer, it is easy to see what an uproar the generation of Strausses would have made about the absurdity of receiving such wonderful recitals on any single testimony; and, on the other hand, had there been several witnesses, and their accounts absolutely coincident, no less loud would have been the clamours about transparent collusion and conspiracy. It is proverbially hard to please those who will not be pleased; and impossible for Omnipotence itself to satisfy the perverse demands of men who are inclined to find or make reasons for rejecting what they are *not* inclined to receive. God Himself cannot adopt any purely moral instruments of conviction and persuasion, of

which man cannot, with self-destructive ingenuity, turn the edge.

Let us imagine a problem ;—to deliver to mankind a system of facts and doctrines (making, as it is admitted the Gospel does, large demands on faith,) in the most unobjectionable manner. It is evident it must depend on no *single* testimony ; it must exhibit, in its *multiplicity* of testimonies, variations enough to prove that there was no concert or collusion, and agreement enough to prove their common veracity. It may well be doubted whether any product of human ingenuity would be found to fulfil all these conditions so perfectly as the four Gospels, especially viewed in conjunction with the Acts and the Epistles. The variations, at all events, are infinitely less than those which have characterised every other cycle of myths,—those gradual formations from floating popular traditions, those shapeless embodiments of popular modes of thought and feeling, associations and tendencies. When the particles of which these consist are no longer held in solution, but condense themselves into a pseudo-historic form, they never crystallize (if we may use the expression) into so near an approach to a regular solid as is presented in the evangelists. They are uniformly amorphous deposits. If Dr. Strauss doubts it, we commend to him an achievement worthy of his critical prowess. Let him, in relation to some such cycle of myths (for example, the Grecian mythology, or the legends of old Rome, or the stories of Robin Hood, or those of the Knights of the Round Table, or the Chronicles of Charlemagne), change places with his opponents ; and while *they* state the historic discrepancies, incongruities, and contradictions, let *him* play the harmonist ; and let him see whether he can reduce the difficulties which they will propose to him to any thing like the same vanishing quantities to which they

have reduced the difficulties he proposes to them ; and let the test of his success be this,—his being able to induce the powerful, acute, and cultivated minds, who, after the fullest investigation, persist in believing the historic verity of the evangelists, to receive as historical the myths he shall patronize. If he shall say that it is impossible that the experiment can be tried, inasmuch as it is impossible to resuscitate a myth which has been once exploded, we reply, that to the infidel and the heathen, the alleged “myths” of Christianity are virtually in that condition ; and yet she often converts the one to the reception of them as true history, and still oftener induces the other to reject his own living myths in favour of her alien pretensions. Dr. Strauss is welcome to attempt either course — of convincing his infidels or converting his heathens — with any circle of myths he shall choose to take under the protection of history.

After having tried both the frigid system of Paulus and the equally frigid system of Strauss—the arctic and antarctic circles of theology — equally bleak, dreary, sterile, icy,—it is to be hoped that the Germans will in time find out that there are other zones and milder skies in which they may dwell in safety ; where their wanderings in quest of truth may cease, and “they may find rest unto their souls.” It is a consummation devoutly to be wished, and not altogether unreasonable to hope. But assuredly they cannot have either the enviable tranquillity of the sincere Christian, or the unsafe repose of the confirmed infidel, while they will perversely aspire to the impossible luxury of being Christians and infidels at the same time, or strive to realise their arduous paradox of a “believing unbelief.”

. Though it was impossible, within the limits prescribed to the preceding remarks, to enter minutely into the questions of

criticism involved in such a work as that of Dr. Strauss, it may be as well to point the attention of the reader, who honestly wishes information and satisfaction on the more important points, to some of the works in which he may obtain them. It were superfluous to mention Lardner's and Paley's works. Several others have recently appeared in English, and of distinguished excellence. Amongst them may be mentioned Greswell's "Harmony and Dissertations;" Robinson's "Harmony;" "The Literary History of the New Testament," an unpretending but valuable volume, in which many of the more difficult and important questions are treated in a manner likely to be all the more acceptable to multitudes of readers, inasmuch as it is free from the extreme and often tedious minuteness which distinguishes more ample works; and lastly, Dr. S. Davidson's "Introduction to the New Testament," in which a large portion of the difficulties, not so much originated, as compiled, digested, and exaggerated by Strauss, are discussed with great learning, acuteness, and candour.

No. II. p. 69.

WHETHER MAN IS INCOMPETENT TO JUDGE OF A DIVINE REVELATION FROM ITS CONTENTS.

THIS doctrine, it may be said, must be received with limitations. This is true; and the limitations are obvious enough. Neither Butler nor any one else who has asserted it, can be supposed to have meant that the *whole* of Christianity is to be regarded as a system so far beyond our capacity of judging of it, that we are absolutely incompetent to pronounce on the excellence or wisdom of any *part*. Often and justly has it been maintained that the exquisite morality of the gospel, — both as to substance and form, — as well as many of its doctrines, are so adapted to the nature, and so approve themselves to the consciousness of man, as to furnish no insignificant indications of a divine origin.

For this reason Dr. Chalmers, who in his earlier work on the "Evidences" excluded the internal class, from the supposed incompetence of man to form a

judgment on the subject, afterwards changed his mind ; and in his later work, gave this class of evidences their just place. All that can be maintained, and all that a reasonable man would venture to maintain is this ;—that though we may see that many parts of Christianity are worthy of God, we are not hastily to conclude that where we do *not* see this, such *parts* do *not* come from him. This would be false logic, and unjustifiable presumption. To say that man is competent to judge of some parts and not of the whole of the system, is no more than saying of some complex machine, or some vast fabric, that enough may be known of it to justify the belief that consummate wisdom presided over its construction, though it may be impossible to penetrate the design of every part or comprehend the bearings of the whole. It is in fact precisely what the theist says, in his argument for the existence of God, founded on the proofs from design in the visible creation. He sees enough, and more than enough, to vindicate his conclusion ; but if he were to affirm that he is competent to judge of the design or coherence of the universal fabric, and to pronounce that such and such parts were unworthy of the Deity ; that, like Alphonso of Castille, he could, had God been pleased to share his counsels with him, have suggested some auspicious improvements, men would laugh at him, if it were not for pity, or pity him, if it were not for horror. “The atom !” they would say. “How can he pretend to know that this or that arrangement is unworthy of the Deity !” It becomes us, in every such case, to say, as Socrates did of the obscurities in the works of Heraclitus—only with infinitely more reason—“What I understand pleases me well ; and I doubt not that what I do *not* understand, would please me as well—if I did but understand it !”

No. III. pages 69—79.

ON THE TWO THEORIES ACCOUNTING FOR THE VARIATIONS AND DISCREPANCIES IN THE SCRIPTURES.

It must be admitted (as indeed is expressly admitted at the close of the paragraph to which this note is appended, and subsequently, p. 70.), that it is very possible for a man who concedes the immense preponderance of the *sum* of the evidence for the truth of Christianity over the *sum* of the objections against it, to take exception to certain portions of the sacred records, historic or otherwise, as mistakes or errors of the writers, and yet apply this principle within perfectly innocuous limits; it must also be admitted that the principle in question is often in *fact* applied within such limits; that is, so applied as not to touch any thing which a candid mind would contend to be of the essence of Christianity. Such a man may ask as Paley, for argument's sake, asks in his chapter on the Discrepancies,—what can it matter to the substantial credibility of the records, if it were admitted that such and such trivial variations in the narrative, or such and such unimportant fallacies in the reasoning, had arisen, in the one case, from erroneous information, or, in the other, from Jewish modes of thinking and feeling? How is the essence of Christianity affected by it? Is any other history discredited on account of unimportant discrepancies? To many powerful and candid minds this hypothesis is satisfactory, and, as *they* apply it, it is also innocuous.

And if other men would apply the theory with the same judgment, or if it had in itself any obvious limits to control its application, the difference between it and that advocated in the essay would not be worth the ammunition to be expended in the controversy

The difference resolves itself merely into the *mode* of accounting for certain difficulties and discrepancies which both parties admit do not touch the substantial credibility of the system.

The precise point of agreement and the precise point of divergence in the two may be thus briefly stated.

Both parties agree that on fairly weighing the entire evidence, external and internal, it is eminently improbable, or rather impossible, that Christianity should have been either a product of artful fiction, or an accidental deposit of tradition; and if it were either the one or the other, that in such an age and amidst so much necessary prejudice and opposition, its fictions or its myths should have been received as *facts*;—and that therefore the Gospel is substantially true. But both are also compelled to admit that there are some objections which cannot be solved and some discrepancies which cannot be reconciled. The advocate of the one hypothesis says, “I think it more probable that such discrepancies are *either* the result of the inevitable effects of the mode in which ancient books are transmitted, and which no miracles are promised to prevent; *or* that these discrepancies are such in appearance only; sometimes arising from the omission of some fact which, if stated, would reconcile them; or from some similar cause.” The reasonableness of such an hypothesis he founds, both on the admitted fact that the like difficulties from the same causes exist in other writings, which, so far from being harshly assumed to be insoluble contradictions, never affect the credit given to their authors; and that in such writings, as well as in those of the New Testament, *real* solutions of many difficulties have been effected by critical recensions of the text, or by more diligent historic investigation of collateral

evidence ; while of others it is easy to see that many, perhaps we may say the great majority, are fairly removable by supposed omissions or supposed restrictions, which, in the silence of the writers, are just as allowable as the hypothetical assumption that no such omissions have been made and no such restrictions are conceivable. He further thinks that this theory of accounting for the difficulties is, *à priori*, more probable than the other, because, admitting the immensely preponderant evidence for the truth of Christianity, it seems hardly supposable that, when so stupendous an intervention as is implied in miracles and prophecy had been employed to authenticate a religious system, that system was left liable to indeterminate corruption and depravation in the very *act* of propounding it to the world ;—because, on inspecting the writings themselves, the very fact that such men as their authors had produced what, intellectually, morally, and historically, it seems impossible that they should ever have produced of themselves, indicates that they had undergone a metamorphosis which he cannot resolve into any thing but their subjection to divine illumination and divine superintendence ;—and because he finds in their writings a great number of expressions, which, taken collectively, seem to indicate their claim to that illumination and superintendence, to a degree which excludes error from the sacred books as they were first given to the world ; and that these expressions, to the full extent of their fairly interpreted meaning, are, of course, authenticated by whatever evidences substantiate any other statement of theirs.

But his great reason for distrusting the opposite hypothesis, is that mentioned in the preceding Essay ; namely, that, in rejecting portions of the records of the canonical Scriptures as, in his judgment, errors or

fallacies of the original writers, he would seem to be playing fast and loose with that general evidence which equally substantiates the claims of what he *receives* and what he *rejects*; that is, to "accept evidence where it pleases him, and to refuse it where it pleases him not." Further, he declares that he has no criterion for the application of the principle.

The advocate of the other hypothesis says, — "I believe that, over and above the errors and discrepancies which arise out of inevitable variations of the text, and from our imperfect knowledge of facts which, if known, would demonstrate that many such errors and discrepancies are apparent only—and many such cases I grant—there are unimportant points, on which these writers were allowed to be occasionally misled by inaccurate information, and to fall into error under the influence of uncorrected prejudice; but I fully believe that the force of the general evidence demonstrates the substantial credibility of their statements, and the divine origin of every essential and characteristic doctrine of Christianity. As to one of the above arguments; I do *not* see that the writers claim an absolute immunity from error; and, in point of fact, do *you* not admit, that if they did not deliver what was erroneous, it has been made so by the corruptions which the lapse of time and imperfect transmission have occasioned? And do you not also make the ultimate rejection or reception of all such matters depend on the conclusions of enlightened criticism?" "True," it is replied; "but the advantage of the former hypothesis, if logically tenable, is that it cannot be abused; it has its own securities against that: we see from the conditions of the transmission, not of the Bible only, but of all literature, that the amount of error is within moderate limits; that it continually tends to disappear in the course of discussion and investigation; and lastly,

that the evidence by which we are to decide such points—history, criticism, philology—however difficult, is fairly within the grasp of our faculties, and is ultimately subject to them. But the other hypothesis has no such safeguards; it is infinitely liable to abuse. If it be admitted that the writers, from whose statements alone we can tell what Christianity is, have in many cases, and to an indeterminate extent, been misled by fallacies in reasoning and inaccuracy of information, what have we to reply to him who will apply the same principle further; who says, “I think, *à priori*, this and this, and this and this, improbable, fanciful, illogical, false”—and who proceeds to reject what is essential to the Christian system? The advocate of the second hypothesis may justly reply:—“He cannot do this, if (as I do) he admits the preponderant evidence for the New Testament; he cannot, so long as he has a particle of candour left, deny that there are some statements which are essential; though it may not be always easy to discriminate them. What can it matter to Christianity if we suppose Matthew or John to have erred in fixing the precise hour of the crucifixion, or whether the supper at Bethany was six or two days before the last Passover?” “True,” would be the reply, “and I fully believe that you have the candour to admit, and the perspicacity to see, the very moderate limits within which your hypothesis should be applied; but surely it is better, if evidence will permit it, to have a firmer security against the want of candour or the want of sagacity in others; for this reason I still prefer the former hypothesis:—but as between *us*, and between any minds who, admitting the general evidence for the truth of Christianity, *honestly* apply themselves to the interpretation of its records, there is no controversy worth waging,—for there will be no substantial difference.”

The advocates of both hypotheses may plead that neither party is called to give an account of the *residuum* of insoluble objections; that they give their assent to conclusions established by a vast preponderance of proof independent of these objections, and are no more bound to give a positive solution of them, than a judge is bound to reconcile a few remaining discrepancies in evidence which is supported by a large excess of probabilities in favour of his decision.

This course of procedure is plainly the dictate of common sense; and is a course better understood, it appears, in philosophy than in theology, and in relation to natural theology than in relation to revealed.

When the philosopher finds some phenomena at apparent variance with a general law, founded on a large induction, he does not proceed to abandon his conclusion, but waits with patience for further light; pretty confident that it will come in time, and perfectly confident that if it never comes, he will not be justified on this account in abandoning a conclusion supported by a thousand facts, because it is found opposed to one. In the same manner the theist (convinced, by an immense array of proofs, of the Divine wisdom and benevolence,) does not allow his conclusion to be falsified because he stumbles at facts which he cannot reconcile with either. He waits for further light, and exercises the *faith* as well as the *reason* of a philosopher.

But "oh! these insupportable evidences!" many minds in the present day are ready to exclaim. "Are we to find our way to truth through all these tangled mazes of learning and criticism? Cannot a man be a Christian without traversing these labyrinths?"

Assuredly he may. It is happily no more necessary that a man should have examined, with the utmost

degree of exactness, the whole field of the Christian evidences, than it is that a man must be a profound astronomer before he can be qualified to embrace the Copernican theory. A few great facts are, on most subjects, sufficient to form the convictions of men; profound knowledge in each is left to those who are necessitated, or predisposed, or at leisure to attain it; and even that profound knowledge is profound only by comparison: in reference to the possible knowledge of any subject, any man's actual knowledge may well be called superficial. Nor is there any in which the exactest study will not disclose a thousand difficulties, and provoke a thousand controversies. What then? *That* fact does not disturb our convictions, nor engage us in a life-long study of the minutiae of any one subject;—if it did, we should never go to another, for we should never have exhausted that one. Ethics, Politics, Law and Medicine, quite as much as Theology, furnish us with abundant examples of satisfactory conviction and resolute practice on very unsatisfactory and imperfect knowledge.

Nor, thorny as may be the controversies in which the infidel may involve the Christian, or in which the Christian may involve himself, if he be resolved to investigate this subject with the greatest possible degree of minuteness, are they more thorny than those common to any other subject, where the appeal is to "moral evidence," and where, moreover, the perception of the force of that evidence depends, in some measure, on an unprejudiced mind and a rectified will; where, as Pascal says, "the heart" is apt to whisper its "reasons, which the reason cannot comprehend." Hence no truth, such is the condition of humanity, is established without conflict and controversy; and even then it is by a very tardy process.

Lastly, it may be asked, whether those professed Christians, who in these days decry the Christian Ev

dences, find less controversy necessary to the establishment of any other basis of religious truth? Do they find it at all more easy to establish among mankind the claims of their "insight,"—their "natural light,"—their "religious instinct,"—their "intuitional consciousness?" Can they make their oracle utter an uniform response? Can they convince the bulk of men that it is an unambiguous oracle at all? Are its nature—powers—limits—decisions—less subject to doubt and disputation, than the evidences of Christianity? Are the metaphysical and ethical problems to which the one gives rise more easy of solution than the historical problems involved in the other? Few will affirm it, who know what the history of Metaphysics and Ethics really is.

On the other hand, are those who maintain that we are to refer, amidst these difficulties, to an infallible human guide, able to prevail on mankind to admit either its necessity or its possibility? Are they without disputes themselves in whom it resides—or as to how far it extends?

We must be contented with our lot. On no hypothesis, by no artifice, can man evade those difficulties which form the necessary discipline, the alternate exercise of his Reason and his Faith, and by which he is trained to docility, humility, and patience. The condition of man will ever be that so forcibly painted in one of the fragments of Pascal: "*Il faut avoir ces trois qualités : pyrrhonien, géomètre, chrétien soumis ; et elles s'accordent et se tempèrent en doutant où il faut, en assurant où il faut, en se soumettant où il faut.*"

THE END.

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